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A

TALE OF THE TIMES.

VOL. III.



A
TALE OF THE TIMES.

BY
THE AUTHOR OF A GOSSIP'S STORY.

DEDICATED BY PERMISSION TO MRS. CARTER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III,

—Long she flourished,
Grew sweet to sense, and lovely to the eye,
Till at the last a cruel spoiler came,
Cropp'd this fair rose, and rifled all its sweetness.

OTWAY.

L O N D O N:
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TABLE OF THE TIMES



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TALE OF THE TIMES.

CHAP. XXXII.

Dang'rous conceits are in their natures poisons,
Which, at the first, are scarce found to distaste;
But, with a little act upon the blood,
Burn like the mines of sulphur.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE appearance of lord Monteith, when the carriage stopped at Powercourt; was sufficiently deplorable to excite commiseration even in those bosoms which felt the strongest abhorrence of his former conduct. Pale, and trembling with apprehension, he asked if his lady were still alive. On receiving an

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answer

answer in the affirmative, he flew to her apartment, not reflecting upon the effect which his sudden return might have. Fitzosborne, possessed of a greater command of his own feelings, stopped him at the door, and, dragging him into an adjoining room, whispered to him, that prudence and composure were highly necessary. “ If you see lady Monteith in your present perturbation of spirits,” said he, “ you will certainly become your own accuser, and perhaps lay the foundation for much future misery. Remember, possibly she knows nothing of Mrs. Harley’s affair. For shame! my friend, how you unman yourself by these emotions.”

“ She lives,” said Monteith, lifting up his eyes, which, to the extreme mortification of Fitzosborne, were suffused with tears. “ If she had died, murdered

“dered by my infidelity, I would not
“have survived her.”

“Can you tell how her illness and
“your infidelity can possibly be con-
“nected? If it proceeds from her
“knowledge of your weakness, you
“have certainly cause to dread seeing
“her. I must entreat you, if you re-
“gard your reputation as a man of
“the world, or your authority as the
“master of a family, do not let even
“your valet witness your disorder.”

He was prevented from proceeding
by the appearance of sir William Pow-
erscourt, whose benevolent heart had
been deeply penetrated by a description
of his son-in-law's distress, though his
paternal pride had been previously sti-
mulated to resent the absence which
even his unsuspecting temper had con-
sidered to be a neglect of his beloved
daughter.

“Be composed, my lord,” said the good baronet, shaking him affectionately by the hand; “my dear child will do well, don’t make yourself so unhappy — she will be very glad to see you, I assure you. She always names you with the greatest tenderness.”

“Dear injured excellence!” sobbed Monteith.

“She never made one complaint of your staying so long in London,” continued sir William. “Sometimes, indeed, she said, The house sits late these turbulent times. Then, after parliament broke up, you had some business to get through to serve a friend. The physicians give us great hope of her to-day; and when you are a little more composed, I will let her know that you are come. Depend upon it, there will be no reproaches.”

“Re-

“Reproaches,” reiterated Monteith, his eyes sparkling with indignation; “I cannot bear reproaches. Those of my own heart are sufficiently excruciating. I won’t see her. Order my horses.”

Fitzosborne, who had watched every expression with serpent wiliness, here observed to sir William, that travelling post with no rest, and scarcely any refreshment, had greatly deranged his friend’s mind. “And I am fearful,” said he, “of some bad effects from the indiscretion of a servant, who hurried into lady Monteith’s apartment to announce the earl’s arrival.”

No other hint was necessary to remove sir William; while Monteith, with clenched fist, traversed the room in an agony which increased every moment.

“Am I expected to beg pardon?” exclaimed he to Fitzosborne.

“ If you go on accusing yourself, and
“ yielding to these extravagancies, you
“ invite impertinence, and must expect
“ mortification. Lady Monteith must
“ be destitute of the ruling passion of
“ her sex, if she does not make you
“ feel that she knows her power over
“ you. Remorse, my lord, like reli-
“ gion, is certainly a business between a
“ man and his own heart; yet, possi-
“ bly, as sir William lectures you upon
“ one head, Mr. Evans may think it
“ right to treat you with a little cle-
“ rical freedom upon the other.”

“ It is all known then,” said Mon-
teith, throwing himself upon a sofa;
“ and I am to be stared at by country
“ boors as a reprobate and a liber-
“ tine.”

“ Nothing is known, or can be
“ known, if you act with common pro-
“ priety. Sir William only talks of
“ your

“ your staying in town, and attending
“ parliamentary business, when you
“ ought to have been nursing your
“ wife in the country. Come, come,
“ Monteith, go and ask her how she
“ does, without entirely abandoning all
“ sense of dignity. But that I scorn to
“ probe a penetrated heart, I could re-
“ mind you, that attention to my *former*
“ counsels would have prevented your
“ present pangs.”

Lord Monteith sighed, and made another effort to visit his countess. The high tone of ecstasy to which his feelings had been elevated on first hearing of her safety, was now considerably lowered; and he almost wished that the separating distance which he had so rapidly passed were still between them, to protect him from the soul-harrowing sight of an injured, yet still beloved object. “ If,” said he to himself, “ she

“ utter one severe expression ; if she
“ look at me with less tenderness, nay,
“ if she do but even betray a knowledge
“ of my folly, I am lost.”

His apprehensions, however, were groundless. Geraldine received him with that smile of ineffable sweetness which generally irradiated her countenance. It was, indeed, no longer playfully animated ; but its pensive languor conveyed even to his alarmed attention the idea of bodily suffering, rather than of mental anguish. After thanking him for the solicitude he had expressed, and which, she said, her dear father had pathetically described, she congratulated him upon the birth of a son, who, though prematurely hurried into the world by her indisposition, (here she stifled a sigh,) was yet, she was happy to find, likely to live.

When

When Providence gratifies the clamorous wishes of us short-sighted mortals, it must not only give us the good that we ask, but it must also adapt the time of its bounty to the moment of our desires. Eight months ago lord Monteith thought nothing but a son wanting to gratify all his wishes. He now started with deep remorse and dismay at the birth of a being, who seemed to rush into existence to reproach him for having wasted the fair possessions to which his ancestors had left him heir, in the frenzy of the gaming-table and the haunts of dissipation. The too susceptible countess read in his embarrassed manner a refutation of all the hopes which a description of his lively emotions on his return had inspired. She could no longer flatter herself with the idea that envy and falsehood had fabricated the paragraph so fatal to her

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peace, and nearly so to her life. She covered her beautiful face, pale as the pillow on which it rested, and, sobbing out an apology for an hysterical weakness which would not permit her to support the fight she had so earnestly desired, she entreated to be left alone. To recruit her enfeebled spirits was the plea that she urged ; but her real design was to lament unobserved the peculiar hardships of her present fate.

The observations she had made upon her lord's character had hitherto disclosed much inconsistency, weakness, and imperfection ; but she had ever been consoled by the conviction, that his heart retained many traits of native goodness, and that his stormy passions, even in their wildest uproar, confessed the power of her gentle influence. Her delicacy shrunk at the thought of dividing his affections with a venal wanton ;

wanton ; and the rectitude of her principles inspired the liveliest concern, when she recollected the guilt which her still-beloved lord incurred by pursuing an illicit attachment. Weak in body ; enfeebled in mind ; reduced by sufferings, and disappointed in her dearest hopes ; her pride wounded in its most susceptible part, slighted by him whom she most wished to please ; and traduced by that world whose applause she had so sedulously courted, what was there to bind lady Monteith to life ? Surely I might now call in Arria's dagger, Portia's firebrand, or some more fashionable quietus, with very good effect. But my heroine was a *mother*, and though man, possessed of firmer nerves and a colder heart, is often unjust to female merit, and falsely supposes that name to be synonymous with weak susceptibility, maternal feelings have

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frequently

frequently inspired such long-suffering quiet fortitude as would add lustre to the annals of a martyr.

Four innocent helpless creatures, who derived their existence from her, taught Geraldine that she had more to do than to lie down and die. In proportion to the hazard of their being deprived of paternal tenderness and protection, they possessed stronger claims upon their mother's heart, and urged her to exert every faculty to preserve their morals, their fortune, and their happiness. Hope revived with the determination of discharging these solemn duties, and whispered, that patience, gentleness, and undeviating rectitude of conduct, sometimes produces a further reward, over and above the certain eulogy of approving conscience. A reclaimed husband *has* been restored to virtue by the mild allurements of a blameless wife; and

and a joyful mother *has* had the glory of leading back a repentant father to his abandoned children. "Be such my lot!" said the countess. "How poor is all other praise! How contemptible every other pursuit!"

These resolutions, though formed in the secure privacy of a sick chamber, might have resisted common temptations; and lord Monteith, if left to his own natural character, would have evinced his penitence for his past faults by a more attentive tenderness; but Fitzosborne knew too well the advantages of disunion to permit the wounds which he had inflicted on the conjugal felicity of the Monteiths to be thoroughly healed. His influence over his lordship's mind was as unbounded as vigour, duplicity, and craft can acquire over a weak, open, unreflecting character. It had been interrupted by the
strong

strong alarm which lady Monteith's danger excited; but as the returning health of the charming countess relieved all anxiety for her safety, her husband grew weary of the trouble of thinking for himself, and, voluntarily surrendering the intellectual liberty of which he was so tenacious, permitted his false friend again "with devilish art," to "reach the organs of his fancy."

The most accurate judges of human nature have observed, that we seldom forgive those whom we have injured; and though the word *forgiveness* may be here misplaced, it is certain, that the pride of human nature, fond of justifying itself, always endeavours to find an excuse for its own misconduct in the behaviour of those who are sufferers from its faults. Almost persuaded that his infidelity and extravagance had escaped discovery, lord Monteith

teith wished to silence the pain of self-accusation by excuses better calculated to stifle remorse than the poor apology which the more enormous guilt of others supplies. While his imagination continued to unite the ideas of Geraldine and perfection, the behaviour of his grace the duke or the most noble marquis to their respective ladies afforded no extenuation of his own folly. But when his jaundiced eye began to think her mirth levity, and her gravity fullness, the load of his own guilt was at once removed. Though the opinion of the world still prescribes forbearance and decorum to the wife, it allows the husband to recriminate, and a defect in temper on the part of the lady is a received excuse for the vices of the gentleman:—a cruel and unjust conclusion, yet recommended by its universal prevalence to the most serious

serious consideration of the instructors of female youth.

Fitzosborne increased all Monteith's extravagance by faint praise, affected silence, or stifled observations. But his chief attention was now directed to the countess. Her forced gaiety and frequent absence of mind plainly told him, that the newspaper paragraph had done its office, and he not unsuccessfully endeavoured to communicate to her his knowledge of her situation, and his commiseration for her sufferings. Every instance of her lord's neglect or inattention was rendered more excruciating to Geraldine by Fitzosborne's watching her countenance, or marking Monteith's behaviour by some slight sign of displeasure. In his conversations with her, he frequently introduced subjects which he knew must harrow up her soul. Reverting again to his favourite maxim, that

“ the

“ the conscious mind is its own awful
“ world,” he commented on the present perverted state of society, in which merit generally mourns in silence, from the injustice or misconception of others. The omnipotence of beauty, when united with its rare associates sensibility and intelligence, was another favourite theme. He ridiculed the illiberality of annexing an idea of guilt to the allowable admiration of what is “ perfect, “ fair, and good.” And he continually affirmed, that minds of a superior stamp ought to shape their conduct by their own innate sense of decorum, and not by the rules intended for more grovelling capacities. He condemned the indelicacy and want of taste of many men of fashion with warmth bordering on severity, for deserting the society of women of refinement and information, and forming gross attachments, in which
intellect

intellect could have no share. But the only remedy which he could devise for this evil was, he said, to relax, instead of bracing, the severity of our system of divorce: and he frequently concluded with expatiating upon the folly of legislators, in not accommodating their institutions to the varying humours of the people whom they meant to control. To some of these suggestions lady Monteith's mind gave an unqualified assent. She doubted the tendency of others; but they were so disguised in the veil of superior zeal for the improvement and happiness of the world, and so sweetened by the adroit mixture of oblique flattery, that she seemed rather willing to blame the limited powers of her own understanding than to question the infallibility of Fitzosborne's all-sapient mind. Sir William, who was sometimes present at these

these orations, was at first extremely puzzled to know what the gentleman meant; but when he found that something was wrong in that palladium of justice which he had ever been accustomed to venerate, the British Constitution, and heard the proposed improvement, his full conviction of his own incapacity for supporting an argument could scarcely prevent him from telling the declaimer, that the remedy was worse than the disease.

Fitzosborne's contempt for the disposition and abilities of sir William betrayed him into an indiscretion which his masterly address could scarcely repair. From his first arrival at Powerscourt he had studied the characters of the Evans's with jealous discrimination; and, as their talents and manners were alike undisguised, he soon found, that they would prove most formidable
opponents

opponents to his iniquitous designs. He was, therefore, peculiarly careful to conceal from them those nefarious principles which he fancied he had sufficiently enveloped to escape the confused apprehension of the good baronet. He was, however, completely mistaken. Sir William's ruminations on Edward's assertions discovered consequences which were at first unperceived; and, his uneasiness increasing, he determined to disclose it to his good friend the rector, with a hope of being reassured by his superior learning.

At the conclusion of an unsuccessful rubber at backgammon, by way of apology for bad play, he frankly owned, that he had been thinking of something else all the time. "It is certainly very wrong in me," said he, "but I almost doubt of the truth of what Solomon tells us, that there is no thing

“ thing new under the sun.” He then repeated Fitzosborne’s theory, and added, “ Is it not a new way of punishing a man for using one wife ill, by giving him leave to marry another ? ”

Many years had elapsed since Mr. Evans’s knowledge of the great world had been solely derived from the limited information of books and newspapers. The dashing spirits with whom he had been formerly acquainted sought celebrity by high phaetons, Pomona green coats, and Artois buckles ; and seldom ventured upon more profound disquisitions than what were necessary to determine the height which the younger Vestris could jump, or the distance that Eclipse could gain on a dray-horse in a course of five minutes. The elegant tutor was now changed into the rural divine, and, in common with all lovers of literature, he rejoiced to hear, that the

the frivolity of fashionable manners was yielding to a spirit of deep research and discriminating curiosity. Supposing that Philosophy still retained her character of being the handmaid of Truth, he felt inclined to pardon a few extravagancies in her admirers; and, believing the fountain pure, he repeated the popular couplet:

A little draught intoxicates the brain,
But drinking largely fobbers us again.

Neither the general philanthropy of Mr. Evans's character, nor the prepossessing impressions which lady Monteth's warm encomiums on Fitzosborne had made upon his mind, could induce him to give a favourable interpretation to a proposition that threatened to sever the grand link which unites correct morals and social happiness. His candour could only point to one conclusion,

sion, which was, that the natural imbecility of his revered patron's understanding increased with his years, and that the conclusion he had drawn from the arguments which Edward had used, was directly contrary to what the orator intended.

The answer which he returned to Sir William was of a temporizing kind. But, after revolving the conversation in his own mind, he determined to apply to that confidant to whom, since deprived of a still dearer friend, he had been accustomed to intrust all his perplexities. He was concerned to find that Lucy's opinion of Mr. Fitzosborne was not in unison with the sentiments of the countess. She expressed her dislike of the mysterious air which he generally affected; and observed, that Geraldine, who knew his disposition thoroughly, apologized for the eccentricity

tricity of some of his sentiments by urging his foreign education, and affirming that she knew he possessed the best heart in the world. "Perhaps he does," continued Miss Evans; "but people who wish well to any cause seldom attempt to break down the bulwarks that defend it." Her alarmed father eagerly inquired, if she suspected any thing deistical in his principles.

"Thank God," returned Lucy, "none of my acquaintance are deists; therefore I do not know in what manner they would act. But surely, my dear sir, when religious truths are impressed deeply upon a cultivated mind, they must give a tincture to our ordinary conversation. Subjects which we esteem sacred are not dragged into table-talk controversy; and the narratives of holy writ are
"not

“ not degraded by being drawn into
“ a ludicrous parallel with the light
“ events of the passing moment. But
“ I am willing to allow that I may be
“ more severe from being less accus-
“ tomed to the freedom of fashionable
“ manners ; for I observe my Geral-
“ dine, who possesses the piety and the
“ purity of an angel, is not shocked at
“ this species of levity.”

“ Does not Mr. Fitzosborne appear
“ to show a very marked admiration of
“ the countess ?” inquired Mr. Evans.

“ Every body must admire her,” re-
turned Lucy, evading a direct reply : “ I
“ do not mean merely on account of
“ her personal charms, though she is
“ now lovelier than ever, but for her
“ patient sweetness and her dignified
“ resignation.”

“ When you use the term resigna-
“ tion, my dear,” interrupted Mr.

Evans, "you should confine it to fewer trials than those which your enchanting friend has yet been called upon to endure. Though we have often lamented the capricious inattention of her lord's behaviour, it is only one of those lesser conflicts, by which Providence mercifully prepares us for the more excruciating struggles that we must all sustain before we are liberated from this world. You know whose sentiments I now repeat. The harmonious voice which once gave them utterance is silent; yet the will of Heaven calls for cheerful acquiescence, and I obey."

Unwilling to depress her father at that moment, by repeating observations which might probably be merely the creatures of her own fancy, Miss Evans dropped a tear to her mother's memory, and was silent.

C H A P. XXXIII.

——Mark you this, Bassanio;

The Devil can cite scripture for his purpose:

An evil soul, producing holy witness,

Is like a villain with a smiling cheek;

O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

SHAKESPEARE.

MR. EVANS was not one of those supine pastors who, contented with their own immediate security, forbear to warn their flock of the insidious approaches of the wolf. His daughter's observations determined him to watch Fitzosborne with scrupulous attention; and, if any thing should happen to confirm his doubts, the hazard of being censured for impertinent interference would not deter him from stating to lady Monteith the danger of an inti-

macy with a man whose passions were not subjected by the restraints which religion imposes.

Edward seemed rather to solicit than to shun this scrutiny. Some casual expressions from sir William, and the turn which Mr. Evans generally gave to the conversation, convinced him, that his zeal to make proselytes had thrown him off his guard, and that in order to secure one convert he must allay the suspicions which a desire to gain many admirers had excited. He saw in Mr. Evans a man possessed of a sincere, zealous, well-informed mind, occasionally the dupe of its own excellence, somewhat hasty in its conclusions, and disposed to receive a few strong expressions as a fair definition of character: to which was added, a confidence in its own attainments, not unfrequent in an educated person long estranged from the

the invigorating collision of congenial society. Edward adapted his behaviour to the rules which this discovery pointed out, and he seized the opportunity which Mr. Evans had given, by leading the conversation to the finiteness of human comprehension, to make what appeared like a candid disclosure of his sentiments.

“ I perceive sir,” said he, “ that
“ you are anxious to discover my opi-
“ nions ; and instead of blaming, I
“ highly admire the integrity of mind
“ which such curiosity evinces. I will
“ own, that during my residence upon
“ the Continent I was somewhat tinc-
“ tured with the scepticism so prevalent
“ there : and I will confess too, that
“ the conversation of the higher circles
“ in my own country, and above all
“ the manners of many of the clergy,
“ have not tended to remove my
“ doubts.

“doubts. While the church appears
“to be more assiduous to defend its
“emoluments, than to promote the
“salvation of its members, no wonder
“if we reject its meagre doctrines.
“The character of the gentleman and
“the divine are not often seen in
“unison. If I had early possessed the
“opportunity of contemplating the
“happy mixture, religion would have
“appeared to me more attractive
“from the reflected beauty of its mi-
“nisters; but, instead of lamenting
“what is past, let me, by propitiat-
“ing your candour, improve my pre-
“sent happy acquaintance.”

“Religion,” said Mr. Evans, re-
turning Fitzosborne’s bow, “cannot
“really suffer by the misconduct of its
“officials in the opinion of any well
“disposed, considerate mind. Our at-
“tendance at the altar does not remove

“us

“ us from human temptations ; and
“ with respect to the fault to which
“ you allude, a too great pertinacity
“ respecting our temporal rights, can-
“ dour will remember that our pos-
“ sessions are not hereditary. Most of
“ us have united ourselves to society
“ by the strong ties of husband and
“ father ; and the study of those divine
“ precepts which were meant to enlarge
“ the social affections may, by the in-
“ firmity of human nature, which mixes
“ error with our ‘ fairest aims,’ some-
“ times extend to a culpable solicitude
“ for the fortunes of those dear connec-
“ tions, and abate the reliance which a
“ christian ought to place in the di-
“ rection and support of the friend
“ of the friendless.”

“ I admit that your apology has
“ weight,” resumed Fitzosborne ; “ but
“ what will you say of that avidity for

“ field sports and love of dissipation
“ which so strongly characterize the
“ divines of this age, and which you,
“ sir, condemn by your own ex-
“ ample?”

“ I blame every particular instance,”
replied Mr. Evans, “ without admit-
“ ting the censure to be determinate
“ against the *whole* order. We are
“ marked by our habits from the rest
“ of society; and the ‘fox-hunting
“ parson,’ or the insignificant ‘Bob
“ Jerome,’ is pointed out to satire,
“ while the pale student, who consumes
“ his health over the midnight lamp in
“ the most important researches, or
“ the laborious instructor of his village
“ flock, are prevented by their obscu-
“ rity from counterpoizing the weight
“ of public odium by their useful un-
“ obtrusive virtues: but, granting the
“ general conduct of the clergy to be
“ as

“ as bad as their slanderers intimate,
“ the service to which we are conse-
“ crated partakes not of our depra-
“ vity.”

“ Perhaps not in minds endued with
“ strong powers of reflection,” return-
ed Fitzosborne: “ but, as the christian
“ system seems best adapted for the
“ lower orders of society, it is much
“ to be lamented, that any thing should
“ impede its progress where it is has
“ the best chance of success. Perhaps
“ the rules by which I would estimate
“ the conduct of its ministers are too
“ strict, and though, unhappily, my
“ own principles have inclined to deism,
“ I have candour enough to regret,
“ that while law and physic are per-
“ mitted to escape uncontaminated by
“ the knavery of petifoggers or the ig-
“ norance of empirics, divinity im-
“ poses perfection upon its students.

“ But our conversation is likely to be
“ interrupted. Permit me to say, that
“ I shall renew it with pleasure. I am
“ a novice at compliment, and shall
“ therefore only observe in my abrupt
“ manner, that if the cause you sup-
“ port were always as ably defended
“ both in the pulpit and in society, in-
“ fidelity would be deprived of one of
“ its most powerful weapons.”

Every one has his weak side. Though the cup of undisguised flattery would have been rejected with disdain, yet when tempered by apparent moderation, and a wish for conviction, it became tolerably palatable. Mr. Evans, indeed, still felt the propriety of hinting the dangerous tendency of Fitzosborne's principles to lady Monteith; but he thought it just to qualify his censures with many expressions of respect for his character, and admiration of his abilities.

abilities. "I grieve for his perverted
"talents," said he; "and yet they
"encourage me to hope, that the
"happy time will come, when they
"will be the instruments of restoring
"him to a comfortable state of mind.
"Many people are driven into infide-
"lity by the stings of a burdened
"conscience; but I should *think* that
"is not Mr. Fitzosborne's excuse for
"scepticism. Yet the manners of the
"clergy can be no more than an offen-
"sible reason."

Geraldine was not in a disposition to doubt Edward's virtues. Though she had been that very morning the unhappy dupe of his cruel duplicity, her agonized soul clung to him as to the guardian angel who was to rescue her out of an abyss of sorrow. She had discovered a letter from Mrs. Harley to her lord. It lay open upon his dressing-table,

and the hated name was so conspicuously placed as necessarily to attract her eye. She could not resist her desire to peruse it, and the fatal contents soon convinced her, that the business which lord Monteith had hinted would soon recal him to London was nothing more than a wish to renew that degrading connection. The discovery seemed to be perfectly accidental. She perceived no preconcerted plan in the circumstance of her having been sent into the room by Fitzosborne to fetch a volume of Rousseau, from which he had just misquoted a well-known passage. She never considered that he had free access to her lord's apartments; and she could not know that he had not only purloined the letter from Monteith, but that he actually instigated him to the proposed journey, by those indirect means of opposition which he had found
to

to be the most suitable way of governing a headstrong impetuous character.

Fitzosborne allowed her time to peruse the letter, and then followed her to the dressing-room. She was leaning in a kind of stupor over a chair, her eyes fixed on the portrait of her lord which hung over the chimney, with a sort of complaining sweetness in their expression which language could ill describe. Edward addressed her with rhapsodical confusion. He said the letter was a mistake. He assured her that Monteith's affections were still unquestionably her's. He execrated his conduct, and then besought her to be calm for her children's sake. At that interesting adjuration the restrained tears stole in silence down her cheek; and her tears again elevated Fitzosborne's sympathizing tenderness to frenzy. He called her "dear lovely excellence!"

He

He wished ten thousand plagues to overwhelm the narrow soul of the traitor who wanted discernment to be just to her merits; and he vowed that he could not look at such a striking impersonification of suffering meekness without wishing to avenge her wrongs.

The countess answered in a faint tone: "My wrongs require no avenger. " My lord should be more careful of his " correspondence. Let me entreat you " to conceal the weakness into which " my curiosity has betrayed me."

" And is that the only proof I can " give you of my inviolable regard?"

" What other proofs can a wife receive, consistent with her solemn " duties?"

" The strictest delicacy, the most " rigid prudence, would allow an " adopted brother to take a more active " part. Remember too, it is still possible, " sible,

“ fible, that the ties of esteem may be
“ sanctioned by those of kindred. Can
“ I seek the recovery of lady Arabella’s
“ favour by worthier means than by
“ trying to disengage her brother from
“ a criminal attachment?”

“ O! name the means that may
“ produce that blessed end,” exclaimed
the impassioned Geraldine, with clasped
hands, and wild emphatic looks: “ res-
“ cue my Monteith from this dreadful
“ thralldom; restore to me his va-
“ luable but estranged heart, and I will
“ pray for you, Fitzosborne—I will
“ entreat of Heaven, that all your fu-
“ ture days may be as happy as those I
“ once enjoyed.”

Edward had no desire to be included
in Geraldine’s prayers. He was equally
averse to hear of her attachment to her
husband, and of her dependance on
Heaven. The advice he gave was of a
satiric

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Edward had no desire to be included
in Geraldine’s prayers. He was equally
averse to hear of her attachment to her
husband, and of her dependance on
Heaven. The advice he gave was of a
fatiric

satiric nature. It was, to charge her lord with his infidelity; to humble him by her superiority; and to convince him by her eloquence. Vice, he affirmed, must shrink from the presence of virtue. The sunbeam of her eye must dissipate the clouds by which Monteith's reason was enveloped. His recovered judgment would compare innocence, grace, and beauty, with prostitution, vanity, and caprice; and a repentant husband, awakened by her reproofs to a sense of honour, would at her feet abjure the infamous Harley, and all her flagitious sisterhood.

Lady Monteith's perturbed mind still possessed sufficient clearness to resist the adoption of such a dangerous expedient, which, by inflaming the violent passions of her lord, was more likely to make him cast off all the decorum which a dread of discovery imposed, than to
check

check the career of his vicious indulgence; and her delicacy pointed out the imprudence of arming his pride in the cause of a courtesan, when she hoped it might be made the happy instrument of releasing him from a degrading connection. "I have," said she, "prescribed to myself but two
" rules for my conduct in this unfortunate affair; and to these I will
" rigidly adhere. I will never reproach
" lord Monteith, nor will I ever divulge his indiscretions. Even my
" Lucy, the partner of my soul, does not
" know that the dejection which she must
" observe in me proceeds from any
" other cause than latent indisposition."

" There are certainly many reasons
" for withholding such confidence from
" Miss Evans; and when I consider
" your father's age and increasing infirmities, I renounce a plan which
" the

“ the respectability of his character
“ once suggested to me, of acquainting
“ him with his son-in-law’s conduct,
“ and urging him to assume the tone
“ highly becoming an injured and affectionate parent.”

“ O! for Heaven’s sake! reject that
“ idea,” exclaimed the terrified countess. “ Let not the halcyon calm of
“ his declining years be clouded with a
“ doubt of his child’s happiness. How
“ ungrateful, how impious should I be,
“ to draw from reposing age the pillow on which it sinks to rest, cheered
“ by approving conscience, and holding sweet communion with that
“ peaceful world for which it has been
“ long preparing.”

“ And are you not afraid that his
“ paternal solicitude will pervade your
“ pious concealment?” inquired Fitzosborne. “ I have seen him watch your
“ varying

“varying looks, and cast glances on
“lord Monteith strongly indicative of
“suspicion.”

“You alarm me. Surely I had
“better leave Powercourt immediate-
“ly, before those suspicions shall be
“confirmed.”

“That proposal, madam, indicates
“your customary prudence, though it
“is hard at such a time to deprive
“yourself of the comforts of his tender
“affection, and the soothing of Miss
“Evans’s friendship. Whither will
“you direct your pensive steps?”

“Not to that cruel world, Fitzos-
“borne, which has tarnished my repu-
“tation, and robbed me of my hus-
“band’s heart. I will go to Monteith,
“and embrace my dear little girls,
“from whom I have been ten months
“separated. Their playful prattle will
“perhaps amuse me; at least their un-
“discern-

“discerning simplicity will not impose
“upon me a painful restraint, in order
“to escape yet more insupportable ob-
“servations; I shall be allowed the free
“indulgence of tears, and my mind
“may possibly recover strength from
“solitude.”

“And is this the lot of the noblest
“ornament of her age and country?”
exclaimed Edward. “O lady Mon-
“teith! are you another victim to the
“blind caprices of Fortune?”

“I was the carver of my own for-
“tune, and must not complain of her
“caprices. I was just to the impulse
“of an early attachment, and I have
“no one to condemn. Even at this
“instant complaint is silenced by pity.
“Lord Monteith cannot be happy.
“The recollection of me must obtrude
“upon his guilty dalliance. The im-
“prudent woman, by whom he is fatally
“entangled,

“ entangled, can urge no claim to his
“ affections, to invalidate my prior
“ right. I am the mother of his chil-
“ dren, the faithful repository of his
“ secrets, the partner of his sorrows.
“ I have soothed his anxieties, com-
“ posed his ruffled temper, watched
“ him in sickness.—O Fitzosborne!
“ words cannot express how much this
“ agonized heart preferred his interest
“ and his happiness to my own.”

Edward grasped her unconscious hand,
and tremulously articulated, “ Must
“ corroding sorrow waste the fairest
“ pattern of all that is good and attrac-
“ tive? Surely, Monteith! thou art
“ the only man who could be unjust to
“ such excellence.”

“ My good friend,” said the countess,
roused to recollection by the ready
tears which bathed her hands, “ sup-
“ press this keen sensibility of my sor-

“ rows. You shall see that I will en-
“ dure them. For my children’s sake,
“ for the sake of all who love me, I
“ will endeavour to exert myself: and
“ to be amused, I will visit the good
“ cottagers whom I once made happy;
“ I will retrace the groves I planted,
“ and resume my accustomed occupa-
“ tions; though every employment,
“ every pursuit, even life itself, is taste-
“ less now.”

Fitzosborne dried his tears, and took a turn across the room to recover the philosophy which he protested had never before been so severely tried. Could nothing be done, nothing be thought of, to restore the charming sufferer to the peace which she so highly merited? Again he addressed the trembling mourner, who, gazing on the portrait of her lord, seemed to apostrophize the beloved remembrance, and to implore
not

not merely compassion but justice, inattentive to the blandishments of her seducer, unconscious of the impropriety of that confidence which her agitated soul bestowed, and only susceptible of the sense of anguish, or the feeble hope of regaining an alienated heart.

“ At length,” said Fitzosborne, after two or three ineffectual endeavours to speak, “ I have thought of two plans. “ They will, indeed, include a little “ oblique conduct ; but the end is too “ pure, too desirable to render objectionable the means of obtaining it. “ I know a young nobleman who wishes “ to rival your lord in Mrs. Harley’s “ favour. He is rich and extravagant, “ and I have some influence over his “ mind. It is but spiriting him to “ outbid your husband, and the venal “ fair will soon forbid the visits of her “ less liberal keeper. Or, I could feign “ a letter

“ a letter as from Mrs. Harley to this
“ gentleman, which would awaken Monteith’s jealousy, and probably might
“ have the same effect of dissolving the
“ connection. You start, madam.
“ Consider that the infamy of the woman is confirmed, and how forcible
“ are the claims which your innocent
“ children have upon your exertions !”
“ I must not preserve their innocence
“ by the forfeiture of my own. What
“ right have I to aggravate the guilt of
“ an unhappy woman, or to transfer to
“ another family the calamity which
“ weighs me down ? Nor can I yield
“ to fully my integrity by basely framing a forged accusation, or to taint
“ my reputation by exposing it to the
“ disgrace of a dishonourable discovery.”
“ I lament when generosity becomes
“ romantic, and I must beg permission
“ to

“ to urge my schemes with what I think
“ irresistable arguments, if the faint
“ hope which I have founded upon my
“ influence over lord Monteith’s mind
“ should fail me. Unfortunately, he
“ is so bent upon going to town, that
“ it will be useless to oppose his plan ;
“ but I will accompany him, and ex-
“ ert all my limited abilities to dis-
“ solve this enchantment. No matter
“ though I lose his friendship ; his vi-
“ cious pursuits have annihilated my
“ esteem, and I scorn to receive future
“ favours from a man unjust to you.”

“ Ah !” thought Geraldine, “ what
“ can break the adamantine chain which
“ links him to my heart ! Should the
“ hour ever arrive when affection ceases
“ to throb, will not duty continue to
“ urge its resistless claims ? But I can-
“ not wonder, that a mind so refined
“ as Fitzosborne’s should call weakness

“ vice, and disdain communion with
“ one who gives licence to those rebel
“ passions which his firmer spirit holds
“ in calm subjection. O, that Mon-
“ teith possessed his virtues ! But earth
“ must not resemble heaven.”

“ You pause, madam,” said Fitz-
osborne, interrupting her train of
thought. “ Am I still so unfortunate
“ as not to be able to suggest any thing
“ deserving of your approbation ?”

“ My excellent friend !” resumed
the countess, “ follow the dictates of
“ your own good heart. Whatever
“ scheme your knowledge of the world
“ suggests, whatever dissuasive argu-
“ ments your superior talents direct
“ you to use, exert them in my cause.
“ But be careful to restrain your zeal
“ to restore my ruined peace, lest it
“ should urge you to pursue those indi-
“ rect paths which, even if successful,
“ my

“ my principles must constantly disprove.”

“ I think,” returned the sophister,
“ the code of laws which you dignify
“ by your obedience permits the serpent to be blended with the dove.
“ Your innocence and your reputation
“ cannot be injured by actions in which
“ you do not participate; and if my
“ conscience justifies my proceedings,
“ what have you to oppose? Be assured,
“ that not even your interest would
“ prompt me to any step which I did
“ not *think* highly warrantable; and
“ here again I am countenanced by
“ those doctrines which teach me that
“ the motive constitutes the act.”

“ Be sure,” said the countess, “ to
“ examine your motives with scrupulous care, lest you should be deceived
“ by a specious good.”

“ My motives,” said Fitzosborne,
“ have undergone the desired scrutiny,
“ and I will abide by the result of my
“ inquiry. But I have two favours to
“ request of you. Do not, while with
“ unremitting assiduity I stake all my
“ hopes, and brave every peril to re-
“ store to you the happiness you have
“ lost—do not, dearest lady Mon-
“ teith! while I am far distant from
“ you, listen to any uncharitable sug-
“ gestions that might tend to prejudice
“ me in your esteem. Should any re-
“ flections be cast upon me for che-
“ rishing some peculiar notions, call to
“ mind that noble candour which
“ teaches us, that those principles can-
“ not be wrong which prompt right
“ actions. Permit me too the honour
“ of your correspondence; and if suc-
“ cess should crown my hopes, if my
“ once valued friend should return to
“ Mon-

“ Monteith worthy of you, allow me
“ to partake your transports; and let
“ the cloud of sorrow and disappoint-
“ ment which now obscures my youth,
“ be brightened by the gladdening ray
“ of your society. For it is only your
“ unreserved friendship that can *now*
“ render life desirable.”

The countess promised the required favours with penetrating sincerity. She confirmed the assurances of her permanent esteem by giving him a miniature portrait of herself, which had been drawn with a view of being decorated with brilliants, and presented to lady Arabella on her intended nuptials. Her opinion of Fitzosborne's merits were wrought up to admiration; and the result of this interview convinced him, that he had gained all the ground in her affections which probability allowed him to expect. Her delicacy was, no longer

startled by his passionate manner : the warm interest which he took in her cause no longer awakened the apprehension of unwarrantable designs. She had all the confidence in his integrity which he wished to inspire ; and he relied upon her gratitude and her generosity to divert every inference, and silence every suggestion, that might be urged to his disfavour.

The moment, therefore, was unpropitious which Mr. Evans had chosen to alarm her fears, by stating his conviction, that the *singularity* of her friend's sentiments were more nearly allied to deism than their apparent moderation and candour made her suspect. I have already mentioned the motives which induced Mr. Evans to soften his intended censure ; but Geraldine listened with impatience even to the extenuated accusation. Not that she thought the charge

charge of deism a light reproach, or that her own conviction of the truth of revealed religion was enfeebled; on the contrary, her present dejected spirits more strongly impelled her to draw water from the refreshing fountain of eternal truth. But her prepossession in Edward's favour made her allow for a little clerical zeal for orthodoxy, which might, she thought, confound characters separated by many discriminating tenets: and, granting that Mr. Evans's suspicions even in their widest latitude were still well-founded, no danger could result from her intimacy with a person to whom he allowed the possession of so much talent and so much moral principle.

Her reply, therefore, to Mr. Evans's observations commenced with a popular sentiment, 'that the faith could not be wrong, when the life was

“right.” “I am afraid,” said she, “many
“people, who profess themselves warm
“advocates for the doctrines of our
“religion, would be unwilling to have
“the reality of their own belief ascer-
“tained by this simple and compendi-
“ous maxim. We cannot judge of
“another person’s heart but through
“the medium of his actions; and even
“calumny itself casts no censure on
“Mr. Fitzosborne. Let us not then
“condemn him on account of some
“*singularity* of opinion; for opinion,
“my dear sir, you know, is free. We
“can only be affected by the actions
“of others, not by their sentiments.”

“Beware, my dearest lady Mon-
“teith,” resumed Mr. Evans, “how
“you extend the apologies which may
“be urged in behalf of harmless sin-
“gularity, to the vindication of those
“perilous doctrines which not only
“corrupt

“ corrupt the soil where they are suffered
“ to spring, but also threaten the ge-
“ neral destruction of all that is dear
“ and valuable to society. Do the vir-
“ tues of even the moral deist stand
“ upon any firm ground? Reason
“ is his god; and he may to-day dis-
“ cover the footsteps of his deity in
“ the paradoxes of Epicurus, and to-
“ morrow in the fables of the Koran.
“ The credulity of the infidel is pro-
“ verbial, and his notions of right are
“ as varying as his creed. He, my dear
“ lady, is the corrupt tree from which,
“ infallibility itself tells us, good fruit
“ cannot spring. He is the polluted
“ fountain whose waters must be bitter.
“ As the mind thinks, the tongue
“ speaks, and the man acts. The bat-
“ tery which he erects against the
“ rock of faith is built on sand, liable
“ to be undermined by every tide, and

“ overthrown by every wind ; yet with
“ restless malevolence he persists in his
“ attack. Observe, madam, the sys-
“ tem ever pursued by sceptics is *offen-*
“ *sive* warfare ; the liberty of private
“ judgment does not content them.
“ Pressing their pestiferous doctrines at
“ every opportunity, they deny us the
“ freedom which they claim for them-
“ selves, and never resort to the plea
“ of moderation, but when closely
“ pressed by arguments which they can-
“ not otherwise avoid. But let them
“ remember, when either vanity or the
“ desire of making converts induces
“ them to unsettle the minds of others,
“ opinion then becomes action, and
“ they are as answerable at the audit
“ of God and their country for the
“ principles which they promulgate, as
“ for the deeds they commit.

“ Have

“ Have you not rather exaggerated
“ Mr. Fitzosborne’s errors ?” said the
countess, in a more decided tone than
she was accustomed to use to her reve-
rend instructor. “ I have often heard
“ him expatiate upon serious subjects,
“ but must own that I never discovered
“ any tendency to deism. If I thought
“ him an infidel, it would give me the
“ liveliest concern ; for, beside the
“ esteem which his virtues inspire in
“ my mind, I owe him indelible grati-
“ tude for many uncommon marks of
“ friendship.”

“ I have repeated the very words he
“ used, madam. Be you the judge.
“ Why he should affect reserve to you,
“ and choose to be unnecessarily ex-
“ plicit to me, is somewhat mysterious.
“ What you tell me of this young gen-
“ tleman, and what I have myself ob-
“ served, strongly awakens my compas-
“ sion.

“ sion. He has desired to renew the
“ subject of our late conversation. I
“ shall return to it with pleasure, and
“ esteem myself happy if my efforts
“ can direct his abilities to their pristine
“ intent, and restore to his bosom that
“ tranquillity which he cannot now
“ enjoy.”

“ You are always in character, my
“ dear Mr. Evans, compassionate and
“ benevolent even to those whose con-
“ duct you disapprove. I will endea-
“ vour to be a fellow-labourer in the
“ same good work ; and though my
“ knowledge is too limited to convince
“ Mr. Fitzosborne’s judgment, I may
“ expedite the conviction he desires
“ by pointing some persuasive passages
“ to his heart.”

“ Ever-amiable lady Monteith !” re-
turned the good man with pious earnest-
ness, “ beware how you enter the thorny
“ paths

“ paths of theological controversy. I
“ respect your sex too much to wish
“ them to hazard the mild lustre of
“ benignity with which the god of na-
“ ture has adorned them, to pursue
“ that uncongenial splendor which
“ they can never obtain. Metaphysical
“ deductions, and philological learn-
“ ing, by which we defend our faith
“ against its assailants, require a se-
“ vere course of study, and more in-
“ tense thought than your habits, or
“ perhaps the peculiar tendency of
“ your intellectual powers, will afford.
“ You will be entrapped into conclu-
“ sions which nothing but skill in the
“ subtilties of argument can elude ;
“ confused by objections ostentatiously
“ multiplied ; the fallacy of which the
“ Ithuriel spear of biblical literature
“ would instantly detect. By a digni-
“ fied silence, or an indication of dis-
“ plea-

“ pleasure, convince the bold disputant
“ who obtrudes his crude notions of
“ an invisible God on your ordinary
“ conversation, that your respect is too
“ profound to enter lightly on the sa-
“ cred theme, and your conviction too
“ sincere to need the adventitious aid
“ of a vanquished opponent. These
“ sophists, my dear madam, though
“ they seek to embarrass others, are
“ themselves well acquainted with the
“ torments of doubt; and it is only
“ by the converts whom their false
“ theory bewilders that they are kept
“ from renouncing it themselves. It
“ is not to a zeal for truth, nor even
“ to the misgivings of conscience, that
“ scepticism owes most of its adherents,
“ but to the pride of human reason,
“ and the love of singularity. Permit
“ them to display these qualities, and
“ you

“you grant them the triumph they
“desire.”

Geraldine allowed the general truth of these observations, but claimed an exemption in behalf of her friend. He was too placable and gentle to love dispute, and too candid to repel conviction. Mr. Evans determined to investigate the existence of these qualities at their next conversation; but the opportunity of observing them never occurred. Lord Monteith set off for London the following morning, and Fitzosborne, by accompanying him, confirmed the countess in that lively sense of esteem and gratitude which she thought she could no way better express than by exerting all her powers to impart to his character whatever in her judgment it still wanted of perfection.

CHAP. XXXIV.

An elegant sufficiency, content,
Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
Ease and alternate labour, useful life;
Progressive virtue, and approving heaven;
These are the matchless joys of virtuous love.

THOMSON.

LADY MONTEITH's fortitude was so severely tried by her consciousness of the motives which occasioned her lord's hasty departure for London, that she found it necessary immediately to adopt Fitzosborne's advice of returning to Scotland, lest the sorrows of her afflicted heart should sometimes disdain the disguise which filial piety induced her to assume. Her parting with her father was marked by circumstances of peculiar tenderness. I shall not, however, draw from them any ominous predic-

predictions. Sir William's advanced age and increasing infirmities on the one hand, and his lovely daughter's depressed spirits on the other, may account for this acute sensibility without ascribing to either the powers of prescience.

The evening previous to Geraldine's departure, her pensive mind was somewhat enlightened by a very agreeable conversation with Miss Evans. "You know," said that amiable girl, "I always had a little cast of the whimsical about me; and probably if you had solicited my company at Monteith, I might have raised an invincible host of objections; but since you say nothing upon the subject, I am perverse enough to determine to go back with you to Scotland."

"My dearest Lucy," said the countess, while her pale cheek kindled with the

the blush of pleasure; “ may you always be thus delightfully perverse! “ Why I expressed less solicitude for “ your company partly proceeded from “ the nature of my own prospects, but “ principally from what I suspect to be “ yours.”—“ Wespinsters,” replied Miss Evans, passing over her friend’s allusion to the state of her own affairs with a stifled sigh, “ are seldom handsomely “ used by you married ladies, when “ we chuse you for our confidants. “ Yet, though I am convinced that “ lord Monteith will know all my secret the very first time you write to “ him, I see the spirit of curiosity so “ very strongly imprinted upon your “ countenance, that I shall indulge you “ with a sight of two letters.”

Perhaps some of my *female* readers may happen to have a little of their great-grandmother Eve’s failing about them,

them, as well as my heroine ; and to gratify it, though in a less degree, I shall inform them, that these important papers were a love-letter, with the reply : and that the author of the former composition was Henry Powerfcourt. An attentive observation of Miss Evans's numerous excellencies had made him for some time her sincere admirer ; and, since not all the prudent delicacy of her character, nor the diffidence of his own, could entirely conceal from his observation the important secret of her preference, his high sense of honour had long prompted him to a discovery of that reciprocal affection which her unassuming virtues had awakened in his heart. He was restrained by reflecting, that, as he had only that heart to bestow, a declaration of his attachment might subject her to all the inconveniences which are incident to a tender engage-

engagement, when pecuniary circumstances prevent it from being cemented by the marriage-bond. His respected patron, with somewhat of the imbecility of age, and somewhat of that tenacity of power which strengthens our attachment to the possessions in which our tenure daily grows more precarious, had still delayed confirming to him the independence which he intended to bequeath. He contented himself with liberally supplying his present wants; and as he was persuaded, that the young man was very well as he was, and had no wish to alter his condition, he even brought himself to believe, that resigning to him the Merionethshire estate would be giving him a vast deal of trouble, which, as he seemed fonder of reading than of business, he would certainly be as well pleased to avoid.

Panting

Panting for independence, yet disdaining to acquire it by any means which he thought irreconcilable with lady Monteith's interests, or with his deference and gratitude to her father, Mr. Powerscourt repeatedly resolved to pursue the desired blessing by the slow, but pleasant path of his own active exertions in some employment. Yet sir William's love of his kinsman's society increasing with his infirmities furnished a thousand objections to every profession or engagement which was successively proposed. The baronet at length precluded all further application by asking Henry, why he wanted to leave him? "Don't be uneasy," said he, "about your future prospects. Depend upon it, I shall provide for you." Thus compelled to refer the security of his own happiness to a distant and uncertain period, Mr. Powerscourt submitted
with

with respectful silence to his benefactor's will. He contented himself with acquainting the amiable object of his affections with the peculiarity of his situation; and he hoped her penetration would consider that as a sufficient reason for preventing his tongue from avowing the preference which his manner strongly expressed.

Though Henry's behaviour perfectly agrees with my ideas of honour, I am afraid some sister of the quill, better versed in the new code which has been introduced into the court of Cupid, will detect a thousand gross misdemeanours, of which the above Henry Powerscourt has been guilty. They may prove, according to the letter of these *recent* acts, that his behaviour to Miss Evans ought to have been more rude, capricious, and inattentive, in proportion as he discovered her preference,

ference, and felt the increase of his own. Very likely the new method of argument may prove, that this would have been the most honourable way of proceeding. I shall still continue obstinately disposed to deny that it is the most natural.

Gifted with that intuitive knowledge which the votaries of the purblind god individually possess, Lucy read her lover's sentiments in his eyes, and allowed the propriety of his conduct. Yet, when she looked forward to the expected events of her future life, gratitude, esteem, and veneration, generally excited a pious tear at the idea, that her own anxieties must not expect a final termination until the neighbourhood was deprived of the blessings it had long received from the unsparing benevolence of sir William Powerscourt.

Affairs

Affairs were in this situation, when lady Monteith arrived from London. She had just opportunity to make a few agreeable discoveries, when the party were deprived of Mr. Powerscourt's company. He was summoned to attend the sick bed of his father, whose expectations, in respect to the marriage of his son, had been quite as unfavourable to Henry's designs, as the protracted bounty of sir William. Young Powerscourt being unquestionably the finest gentleman the good old yeoman had ever seen, there arose a necessity of his matching well; and as no lady in all the land could refuse him, there was no reason why he should take up with a parson's daughter. Indeed old Mr. Powerscourt had already selected his daughter-in-law; his bold ambition having directed him to no less a personage than

than madam Hetty ap Owen ap Thomas, his own landlady, and lady of the manor beside. But as the juvenile attractions of youth, beauty, and sweetness, were less visible in the preferred fair, than the solid advantages of large property and high blood, the father was a more ardent admirer than the son: and, though the path of the latter was very much smoothed by the encomiums which the former bestowed upon "son Hal," and an enumeration of what his cousin sir William intended to do for him, which were repeated every time he went to pay his rent: nay, though miss Hetty herself always distinguished the bow of young Powerscourt by a lower curtesy, as she walked up the aisle to her own pew on a Sunday, and even once honoured him so far as to ask him to dine with her and the

curate, Henry continued inviolably constant to his Lucy's

Dimpled smile, and damask cheek,
And eye of glossy blue.

He was relieved from a persecution which was urged with such well-meant but mistaken earnestness as at length made it painful, by the death of his father. His regret for that event was softened by receiving a letter from sir William a few days afterwards, inclosing the title deeds of the Merionethshire estate, and containing an assurance, that since he wished to marry, he should have a house built for him within a mile or two of Powerscourt manor.

As, in common with all Arcadian writers, I presume the village rustic is too happily engaged with his flocks and his shepherds to attend to the affairs of his neighbour; and being persuaded that the love of news and the spirit of

interference of which I have formerly seen some traces at Danbury are merely local diseases; I suppose the accession to Mr. Powerscourt's fortune continued to be a profound secret in the parish where his father resided: at least I cannot conceive that any whisper, which the taylor, or the schoolmaster, or the barber, might circulate, could, through the medium of the curate, be diffused in the atmosphere of miss Hetty's best parlour; or that any one, by adding a unit to the rent-roll which sir William had resigned, could be the occasion of the extraordinary and even oppressive civilities with which the distinguished lady whom I have just named loaded Mr. Henry Powerscourt. Her house was at his service; her carriage was at his service; her servants were at his service; nay the world even said, that she more than hinted an offer of herself.

This latter report I disbelieve, because it went somewhat further than what the proverbial hospitality of her country can account for. But if she had any latent views, they soon received a complete mortification. Henry's first step, after the arrival of the welcome gift, was to express his gratitude to the donor; his next, to request, that miss Evans would render independence more valuable by sharing it with him.

"And now, my Geraldine," said Lucy to the countess, scarcely allowing her time to finish the letter which had introduced this long digression, "I call
"for your felicitations. Henry, you
"see, ingenuously avows the early attachment which made you the first
"mistress of his heart. I have not
"that extreme refinement which can
"only be content with a primary affection. It is sufficient for me, that
after

“ after long observation he owns a preference which he is too noble to affect, and too upright to withdraw. Secure in his honour and his virtue, not even your attractions will excite suspicion; and though the tempered expectations of four-and-twenty abate much of the sanguine enthusiasm of nineteen, neither experience nor reflection teach me to doubt of the general happiness of my future lot with such a partner as my long-loved Henry.”

Lucy's head now reclined upon the shoulder of the countess, to conceal at once her blushes and her tears. “ But,” added the sweet girl after a moment's pause, “ you express neither surprize nor pleasure at the wonders which I am revealing.”

The reader, who remembers the conjugal sorrows which clouded the countess's

tefs's mind, will not wonder, that, though free from envy, her Lucy's brighter hopes occasioned a painful comparison; and we cannot be surprised at events which ourselves have directed. It was natural for Miss Evans to wonder why sir William, who had so long delayed the promised gift, should bestow it just at that time; and why he, who had been generally hostile to marriage, and decidedly averse to Henry's forming any engagement which threatened to deprive him of his society, should even suggest a plan for his immediate establishment. But lady Monteith possessed the clue that could unravel the secrets of the labyrinth. Her observations on her cousin's manner had convinced her, that he was no longer insensible of her friend's worth, and she assiduously employed all her interest with her father to expedite his intended donation, to
the

the delay of which she rightly attributed the prevention of a desirable union. She had once intended to apply to the known munificence of her lord ; but her illness, and the painful events which had followed and preceded it, prevented that design, and interrupted her negotiation with her father. She renewed it with increased earnestness upon the death of the elder Mr. Powerscourt ; and at length, by the discovery of her Lucy's secret, won his cheerful acquiescence. " I never thought, my dear," said the good man, " that those young people had a liking for each other. " I am sure, if they had told me so, I should have given my consent immediately. Why did they keep me in the dark ? My god-daughter is a very discreet girl ; and you know I can fix them so near me that I may see Henry every day, which, as it is

E 4 " fitting

“fitting you should give up most of
“your time to your husband and chil-
“dren, is, let me tell you, a great
“comfort to me. I always was afraid,
“that Henry would take it in his
“head to be in love with some of your
“London ladies, who would not like
“to play a game of cribbage to divert
“an old man now and then; and I
“thought Lucy never intended to
“marry, not hearing of her having
“any lover, which for such a pretty
“modest girl was extraordinary. Well,
“I must say, it is very odd that they
“should happen to like each other, for
“things don’t often happen as we wish
“they should.”

Though sir William’s constitutional habits gave a slowness to his deliberations, nothing could be more rapid than his execution of any plan in which he knew the happiness of a fellow-creature to be involved.

involved. He immediately sent for his steward and his attorney. The writings were sorted out, the deed of gift drawn up, the letter written, and the messenger dispatched, before he could commit himself to his pillow with the hope of enjoying a comfortable revision of the proceedings of the past day. Lady Monteith could scarcely restrain him from telling his little god-daughter, as he called her, after dinner, that he liked her choice very well, and that, if Geraldine had told him sooner how she had fixed her affections, she should not have been kept in suspense. The countess was desirous of enjoying the refined pleasure of secretly dispensing good; and she wished, that an explicit avowal on the part of Henry should precede the detection of Lucy's love.

That avowal was made in terms equally honourable to his own ingenu-

ous integrity, and auspicious to her future happiness. And while a tear stole down Geraldine's cheek at her cousin's impressive recollection of the event which constrained him to subdue an attachment that "grew with his growth" and entwined itself with all the strong impressions that ardent youth receives, she saw with pleasure the succeeding paragraph point out the merits of his mature choice with clear discrimination, and generously prevent the confusion of maiden delicacy, by carefully avoiding that apparent certainty of acceptance which his knowledge of the state of her heart might have prompted him to assume.

Miss Evans's reply announced the paternal sanction which her lover had solicited, and she added, with all the frank sincerity of her character, a confession of the esteem and gratitude (I am almost

most afraid she said *tenderness* too) which his long-known worth had inspired. The laws by which we vestal sisters were accustomed to conduct our affairs of courtship were much more austere and remorseless, and better calculated to keep up the dignity of the sex than those which the present race of beauties adopt.

Then love could live on slender bounties,
Then lovers gallop'd o'er two counties,
The ball's fair partner to behold,
And humbly hope she caught no cold.

One year generally elapsed before the suitor could presume to expect a direct reply; and it was not till after seven years punctual attendance, or the actual drawing up of the marriage settlements, that the lady's acknowledgment of reciprocal esteem could be justified. Some husbands, my cotemporaries, have declared, that the trepidations of doubt,

and anxiety scarcely subsided till those of the modern couple generally begin; I mean, when the fair one promises at the altar to be her good man's unalienable property "till death do them part." But though I disapprove of the renunciation of this decorous severity in most instances, I am inclined to permit a little latitude when the lover acts with the integrity of a Henry Powercourt, and the lady possesses the unaffected prudence of a Lucy Evans. To terminate my diffuse account of this correspondence, Lucy repressed her lover's hopes of a speedy union by stating her previous resolution of spending the following autumn in Scotland.

"No, my love," said the countess, whose attention appeared to be roused by the conclusion of her friend's epistle, "I will not allow you to make such a sacrifice. Dearly as I prize your society,

“ciety, you shall be just to prior
“claims. I shall not be wretched, I
“mean dull, without you. I will sit
“under my favourite beeches, and me-
“ditate on that fair portrait of connu-
“bial happiness which you and your
“Henry will present. He has been
“long depressed in his fortunes and
“crossed in his hopes. How shall I
“rejoice in the idea of his being at
“last possessed of the independence that
“he so well deserves, and of the hap-
“piness which his dispassionate judg-
“ment best approves! You too, my
“Lucy, rich in every domestic excel-
“lence! my heart rejoices at the pro-
“spect of your virtues expanding in a
“larger sphere; of your fortitude and
“quiet heroism receiving its merited
“reward. I will not be the means of
“delaying this auspicious union a single
“hour.”

“But

“ But as my swain says nothing upon
“ the score of an early day, or fond
“ impatience, am I to give him a hint
“ that I expect such flourishes? No in-
“ deed; I think I have been quite frank
“ enough already, and set him more at
“ ease than any lover (I mean except
“ himself) ought to be. His father’s
“ death is very recent; and I know
“ his sense of propriety will prevent
“ him from proposing marriage at pre-
“ sent. Let me then, by showing that
“ I do not expect it, convince him that
“ I can imitate the virtues I revere.
“ What! but one faint smile, Geral-
“ dine, at that declaration? I expected
“ to have heard some pretty allusion
“ to sir Charles Grandison, or to
“ the ‘Phoenix, that sole bird.’ Can-
“ not you recollect some little shade in
“ Henry’s character? his purple coat,
“ for instance, which diverted you so
“ much

“ much two years ago. But perhaps
“ you trust to time to abate the ro-
“ mance of my sentiments, or men-
“ tally quote the answer to your own
“ conundrum, ‘ why marriage is like a
“ microscope ?’—‘ because it discovers
“ little blemishes.’

“ It is happy,” said the countess,
“ when there are only little blemishes
“ to discover. I will no longer refuse
“ your society, my dear playful friend ;
“ but I accept it upon one condition,
“ that I may put a postscript to your
“ letter to Henry.”

“ If you will promise to say nothing
“ as coming from me.”

The countess gave her word to the contrary, and then added the following lines :

“ I have consented to take your
“ dearer self to Scotland, in hopes that
“ the strong attraction will compel you
“ to

“to give us the additional pleasure of
“your company. I would tell you how
“I rejoice at your proposals to my
“Lucy, but words are so inadequate to
“my feelings that I must refer you to
“your knowledge of my character to
“estimate the sincerity of my trans-
“ports. May you be as happy as your
“mutual virtues deserve, blessed with
“health, peace, and every worldly com-
“fort! There is an event (O how my
“filial heart abjures the impending
“evil!) which will enable me to give
“my valued friend stronger marks of
“esteem and gratitude than ineffectual
“wishes, by fulfilling a promise ever
“sacred to

“GERALDINE MONTEITH.”

CHAP. XXXV.

—Is aught so fair

In all the dewy landscapes of the spring,
In the bright eye of Hesper, or the morn,
In nature's fairest forms, is aught so fair
As virtuous friendship?

AKENSIDE.

No event happened immediately after my Heroine's return to Scotland that deserves to be recorded. Though Miss Evans's conviction that some concealed sorrow preyed upon her amiable friend's mind, was the secret cause of her accompanying her, she rightly judged that it was of a species which would receive no diminution from participation, and therefore forbore to intrude upon the sanctity of woe. She contented herself with employing the stores of her well-cultivated

cultivated mind, and the emanations of her sportive fancy, to alleviate the dejection which admitted not of cure. Her anxious desire to amuse her pensive companion sometimes made her cheerfulness more redundant than agreed with her natural character. But lady Monteith's persuasion, that the sunshine of her prospects gave a more festal gaiety to her spirits, prevented her from perceiving that her Lucy's vivacity was more symptomatic of assiduous, anxious friendship, than expressive of the calm satisfaction of heartfelt happiness.

The countess sometimes drew a parallel between her friend's situation and her own, and her heart sunk at the chilling contrast. How bright the radiance of love purified by esteem! How mild the lustre of equal minds, humble but not contracted fortunes, similar tastes, and moderate desires! How
blank

blank were her own views! Not the uncontrolled possession of an extensive domain, not the pomp and superiority of feudal greatness, cloud-capped mountains crowned with forests of pine, lakes bestudded with verdant islands, and fringed with odoriferous shrubs, could now afford her any pleasure. The spacious mansion, the numerous establishment, seemed but mementos of their absent lord. Even the society of her lovely children could not give the expected consolation. They spoke and looked like their faithless father, and the tear of anguish mingled with the smile of maternal rapture.

The correspondence of Fitzosborne afforded no satisfactory intelligence. If one letter announced a plan which it was hoped might detach him from Mrs. Harley, the next epistle proclaimed its failure, and only detailed some mutilated

lated conversations which implied a more total alienation of his lordship's affections than the writer thought it was prudent to communicate. Her tearful eyes fixed upon these particulars, and passed over with cold and vacant gaze the compliments which Edward addressed to her person, mind, and conduct. She scarcely observed even the sympathy that he expressed for her sufferings; and the advice he gave her to detach her affections from a man who he feared would never again return her tenderness, was rejected with a conviction that it was impracticable.

The frequency of lady Monteith's receiving letters in a male character very dissimilar to her lord's, at length excited Miss Evans's curiosity; and it even rose to anxiety upon perceiving, that they were always reserved for a private perusal. Her attention, thus casually fixed,

fixed, was continually revived by some fresh mystery which every post-day revealed. The countess seemed almost fretfully impatient till the mail arrived; and if any company were present at the sounding of the horn, she always made some excuse to leave the room. More than once Lucy perceived her select the letter of this favoured correspondent, and retire to read it, while even her lord's lay unopened. Yet they appeared rather to increase her melancholy than to relieve it; and constantly, after having shut herself in her own apartment to answer them, her face bore unequivocal marks of having been bathed in tears.

Disdaining to satisfy her doubts by indirect means, and unable to pursue any plan of raillery or playful artifice on what she feared was a very serious subject, Lucy determined to give her friend

friend an impressive hint of a very apparent impropriety ; but unfortunately the interference of the Evans's was always so ill-timed as rather to assist than to frustrate Fitzosborne's diabolical views. In reply to a letter in which the countess, like the artless placable Demodemonia, had professed that it was impossible for her affections ever to change their object, Edward announced the welcome tidings of her lord's speedy return. The merit of this reformation was, however, wholly owing to his friendly monitor's contrivance. He had cut out that part of Geraldine's letter which contained those affecting expressions of inviolable attachment, and pretending, that it was addressed to one of her London correspondents, with whom he was intimate, he had shewn it to lord Monteith, and so strongly worked up his feelings of compunction
and

and shame, that a rupture with Mrs. Harley was the consequence. Fitzosborne regretted, that he was not likely to witness the reconciliation which he had so anxiously laboured to promote; but the Minister had just given an absolute promise in his favour, and his long experience of courtly forgetfulness convinced him of the positive necessity of reviving recollection by constant attendance. He however added, that if his friend should not be in a desirable state of mind when he left London, he would renounce all his hopes of an establishment rather than risk the stability of recent resolutions by leaving him, during his long journey, to the suggestions of his wayward fancy.

An exclamation, or rather shriek of surprize and transport, which followed the perusal of this letter, drew Miss Evans into the countess's chamber. She
found

found her friend sunk upon her knees, her hands and eyes lifted up as in a strong transport of devotion, while the paleness of her countenance indicated immediate danger of fainting. Lucy flew to assist her. "No," said lady Monteith, gently rejecting the proffered salts, "I am not ill.—A sudden surprize " has overwhelmed me—leave me to " myself a little—I shall soon be composed." Miss Evans silently withdrew.

Contrary to the usual hospitality of Monteith castle, the friends sat down *tête-à-tête* to dinner. The noble hostess was recovered from her first emotion; but her manner indicated that some important event demanded all her thoughts, which reluctantly submitted to pay a scanty attention to passing objects. The servants were no sooner withdrawn, than, unable any longer to restrain her full.

full-fraught heart, she told her friend that they should soon have a welcome addition to their party in the company of lord Monteith, and perhaps Mr. Fitzosborne also.

“ I sincerely rejoice in my lord’s return,” said Miss Evans; “ but I thought his friend was fully occupied either in attending the Minister’s levee, or in discharging the duties of the office which you told me his lordship’s interest would procure him.”

“ He will sacrifice every thing to the desire of proving his sincere attachment to me,” said lady Monteith, too much engrossed by the lively passion of gratitude to attend to the caution which she had hitherto used upon the subject of her correspondence with Edward.

Alarmed at these expressions, Miss Evans persevered in a curiosity which

she would have reprobated upon any other occasion; and Geraldine, drawn by her interrogatories to be more explicit than she at first designed, at length confided the whole story of her latent sorrows. She spoke the present feelings of her heart; and though she supposed it still attuned to gentle complacency and forgiving sweetness, distress had for some time prevented her from engaging in her customary duty of self-examination; and the indignant sensations of slighted beauty, and offended desert, gave an air of resentment to her narrative of her husband's perfidy, which the limited merit of his reluctant return and irresolute repentance could not subdue. She hastened from this painful subject to the more pleasing theme of Fitzosborne's discernment, zeal, and fidelity; his refined delicacy, correct judgment, and all the capacious powers of his exalted soul.

“ Possibly

“Possibly he may mean well,” observed Miss Evans, after having, with marked attention, twice read Fitzosborne’s letter. Surprized at a suggestion which seemed deficient of her usual candour, lady Monteith replied, that the integrity could not be doubtful which spoke by the most noble actions. “What,” said she, “but disinterested virtue could thus direct his unwearied assiduity to attempt the restoration of my domestic happiness?”

“There is a mystery in this business,” continued Lucy, “which I cannot penetrate. It is to me astonishing, that lord Monteith, after having been several years your happy husband, should, unsolicited and self-seduced, abandon you for a woman, whose weak pretensions to his notice must arise from some faint transcript of that intelligent beauty which ani-

“ mates your countenance, or some
“ contemptible imitation of the playful
“ wit which irradiates your conver-
“ sation.”

“ My dear secluded friend,” replied
the countess, “ knows nothing of the
“ corrupt manners of the world; of
“ the eclat which general opinion at-
“ taches to novelty, or of the celebrity
“ which is oftener shared by eccentrici-
“ ty and a bold defiance of decorum,
“ than awarded to real desert.”

“ True,” said Lucy; “ happily both
“ for my temper and my heart, I am
“ ignorant of the manners you describe.
“ But how could lord Monteith see
“ this Mrs. Harley? A woman of her
“ description must be a stranger to the
“ parties he would frequent: I mean,
“ while he continued unseduced by the
“ allurements of vice.”

Lady Monteith observed, that though women of character never visited courtezans ; yet unless they were very low, or very audacious, the latter always appeared in public places ; and if a certain degree of fashion was annexed to them, either on account of their own wit and elegance, or for the rank or talents of their admirers, gentlemen felt themselves not disgraced by being seen in their parties. It was, therefore, very possible for her lord to see Mrs. Harley sufficiently to be allured by her person and conversation, without his frequenting any scenes unbecoming his rank or injurious to his reputation.

Lucy sighed at the relaxed manners which seemed to usher in the triumphs of relaxed principles. But her suspicions of some nefarious proceedings on the part of Fitzosborne were not yet entirely removed. " I must not then,"

said she, “suppose my lord quite
“changed; but still I know you are
“the same. Your feeling heart will
“not allow you to estimate the degree of
“regard which you should bear to the
“husband of your youth and the father
“of your children by the cold plea of de-
“fert. Your forgiveness would outstep
“his solicitations; and every time you
“spoke or wrote to him, the sentiments
“of your full-fraught heart would give
“a dignified tenderness to your expres-
“sions remote from reproach, and bet-
“ter calculated to awaken compunction.
“How came it, my love, that this suf-
“fering gentleness, exerted at Powers-
“court, or the affectionate letters that
“you have written to him since you
“have been here, have had no effect;
“but that the mighty good should at
“length be accomplished by the skilful
“contrivance and artful interposition
“of

“ of Mr. Fitzosborne? Has he a greater
“ influence over your husband than
“ you could acquire? You, who are so
“ much interested to exert the resistless
“ power of your many invincible
“ charms! How dissimilar must lord
“ Monteith’s character be from what it
“ appears!”

Geraldine pleaded, that people are differently disposed at different times; and that similar actions and sentiments frequently fail of producing correspondent effects; and she accounted for the inefficacy of her pen by owning, that she had only written short and in some sort formal letters to her lord since her return to Scotland. “ No longer able,” said she, “ to pour forth my whole
“ heart, I was glad of some extraneous
“ subject which would occupy the vacant
“ page.”

“ And how did you then hope to re-
“ claim him?” inquired Lucy. “ I
“ should think that if he perceived any
“ coldness in your manner he would
“ turn that discovery into an apology
“ for his behaviour.”

“ I could not help the construction
“ he might put upon my letters. Sor-
“ row cannot be diffuse, unless where
“ it may unbosom its woes.”

“ Did you not write at large to Mr.
“ Fitzosborne?”

“ I did. He knew my secret, and
“ in his interposition was my only
“ hope.”

“ Do women of fashion, my Geral-
“ dine, countenance one another in the
“ custom of having male confidants as
“ well as male attendants?”

“ There is a little pique,” thought the
countess in that observation; “ but
“ friendship warm as my Lucy’s is very
“ suf-

“susceptible, and I will not resent her
“well-meant acrimony.”

“Be assured,” said she, clasping Miss Evans’s hand with a smile of tender sweetness, “that accident alone gave
“him possession of what prudence
“taught me to conceal from you.” She then related the principal particulars of what passed in lord Monteith’s dressing-room at Powerscourt; but though all her communications were intended to place Fitzosborne in a fairer point of view, the suspicious Lucy only discovered increasing mystery, if not absolute duplicity.

“It is plain,” said she, in reply to lady Monteith’s narrative, “that Fitzosborne *early* knew of your lord’s in-
“constancy. It is plain too, that he
“has all along been assured that he
“possesses a considerable influence over
“his mind. Your admirable conduct,
“my

“ my Geraldine, has convinced the
“ world, that, though your husband’s
“ passions are hasty and impetuous,
“ they may be directed by gentle ma-
“ nagement. Is it not wonderful then,
“ that all Mr. Fitzosborne’s boasted pe-
“ netration, judgment, and self-com-
“ mand, should not have struck at the
“ root of this fatal connection before
“ it was confirmed by habit ; or that it
“ should continue so long, after he had
“ set all his acknowledged abilities to
“ work for its annihilation, when he
“ had him to himself too, with unin-
“ terrupted power to act as he thought
“ most expedient ?”

“ But he has succeeded at last,” ob-
served the countess, rather fretted than
convinced by the evident drift of her
friend’s conversation.

“ He has : but how ? By means in-
“ compatible with the frank ingenu-
“ ousness

“ousness of your character, and which
“must either subject you to the apprehension of your lord’s discovery of a
“premeditated fraud, or force you to
“confess that, despairing of your own
“influence, you have applied to a
“knight-errant for assistance. Only
“consider too, how inadequate are the
“means, if the victory were indeed so
“difficult. Did lord Monteith doubt
“your affection, your constancy, your
“forgiveness? Who inspired those
“doubts? Or how came it, that your
“champion’s eloquence could not dispel them? But I perceive I distress
“you, my Geraldine. Pity, love, and
“admiration for you, are the predominant feelings of my soul, which
“exults in your brightening prospects.
“See, for once I transgress against my
“usual abstemiousness: this glass of
“Champagne is, to the speedy and
“happy

“happy return of the agreeable lord
“Monteith. You pledge me, I know,
“in that sentiment. I have not, how-
“ever, quite finished it. Observe what
“follows:—But no Fitzosborne with
“him.”

The countess, smiling, wiped a start-
ing tear. “I perceive,” thought she,
“whence Lucy’s prejudices against this
“amiable man arise. Her father sus-
“pects him of infidelity. It is a pity,
“indeed, that he does not add the lustre
“of piety to his acknowledged virtues;
“but it is more unfortunate, when re-
“ligion gives its champions a tincture
“of bigotry and censoriousness.” Her
children, entering the room at that mo-
ment, made the images of Fitzosborne
and his opponents yield to the tender
recollection of their returning father.

That much-desired event speedily
took place, and received an additional
recommendation from its happening
sooner

sooner than even lady Monteith's calculations judged to be possible. Her lord met her with a glow of tenderness, which quickly made her trembling agitation yield to the most delightful composure, while Lucy's sympathetic bosom swelled with grateful rapture. She turned her head aside to utter a prayer for the continuance of this renewed affection, and perceived that *all* her wishes were not fulfilled. Fitzosborne was of the party. He made her a most profound bow. An abrupt curtesey was her return, as she glided by him to her own apartment.

"It is but suspicion," said she to herself, striving to calm her agitated thoughts; "and I am certainly very
 "wrong in acting upon it as if it were
 "certainty. I think I see invidious
 "guile in every feature of his counte-
 "nance. Yet supposing my conjec-
 "ture

“ ture right, is it prudent for me to
“ put him upon his guard, by showing
“ him that I dislike him? I shall be bet-
“ ter able to warn my friend of his de-
“ pravity, by at least appearing to re-
“ ceive that impresson which he chuses
“ to give me of his character.”

Miss Evans's natural sincerity, and the ardour of her attachment to the countess, prevented her from pursuing the line of conduct which she had prescribed. As her strong sense and extensive reading enabled her easily to detect the fallacious sophisms which Fitzosborne easily passed upon his more partial or less discerning auditors; so her frank ingenuoufness, undisguised by the habits of polished life, heightened by her early imprinted reverence for sacred truths, and her anxious apprehensions for the security of her beloved Geraldine, against whom she saw that the infernal artillery was

was chiefly directed, scarcely allowed her to confine her indignation within the bounds which her unaffected propriety of manners would otherwise have observed. But violence generally defeats its own intentions. The horror she conceived against Fitzosborne's supposed designs induced her to view his every word and action with suspicion: and her eagerness to convict him not unfrequently produced a false accusation, of which lady Monteith's anxiety to clear the wounded honour of her friend constantly took advantage.

The result, therefore, of this vigilant scrutiny was not what Lucy hoped it would be. Geraldine, instead of being convinced that she harboured a bosom-traitor, saw in the friend of her early youth another instance of the usual effects of a secluded way of life, pertinacity of opinion and austerity of manners.

The

The reconciliation of the earl and his countess, though apparently cordial, was not attended with that tranquil confidence which preceded the disastrous period of his lordship's enormities. He seemed to feel degraded by the virtues of his wife. He discovered reproach in her observations, and severity in her conduct. No longer able to flatter himself with the hope that his faults were not trumpeted to the winds, he sometimes construed her behaviour into contempt and indifference; and though the exquisite anguish which that idea caused might have told him that a transient infatuation cannot displace rooted regard, he always fancied that he could retort scorn with scorn; and as his decisions and actions followed each other with rapid pace, he soon determined to relinquish that tenderness of manner which compunction had imposed on his
first

first return, and which, he thought, had too much the air of self-accusation to suit the dignity of a husband's character. She, on the other hand, though assured by Fitzosborne that the breach with Mrs. Harley was irreconcilable, could not repress her fears, lest a heart which once had wandered might be again enthralled. It was plain that Fitzosborne had the same apprehension. His visit to Monteith proved, that, to use his own words, "his friend was not in
" such a desirable state of mind as to
" permit his dependance upon the sta-
" bility of recent resolutions." Thus aggravated, Geraldine's dread of estranging her husband by her behaviour, or giving him an excuse for future infidelity, far exceeded the bounds which affection alone would have prescribed; and her manner had an air of restraint which

which the increasing gloom of her lord's did not relieve.

Beside the accusations of conscience, Monteith's soul struggled with other sorrows. His initiation into the mysteries of the gaming-houses had been attended by severe losses; and while the extravagance of a mercenary courtesan had been supplied with the sums appropriated to his tradesmen, he had satisfied his debts of honour by granting annuities upon his estate to that set of harpies who glory in the wealth which they have acquired by administering to the vices of mankind. For the first time since his marriage, the earl was informed by his steward, that the yearly expenditure would greatly exceed his rent-roll. Impatient of enduring the blame of any fault which he could transfer to another, he determined to place this defalcation to the sums which
lady

lady Monteith had expended in the improvement of the adjacent country, and in some fresh erections at James-town, with which she had amused herself during his absence. He read her a long lecture of œconomy; reprobated her turn for expensive alterations; and affirmed, that it would be the means of compelling him to leave the seat of his ancestors. These reproofs were new, ill disguised by the pretence of providing for his son's education, and ill-timed: for, relying upon his wonted liberality, Geraldine had not only endeavoured to occupy her mind by some expensive erections in the park, but had also set on foot some new charitable institutions which her benevolent heart could not abandon without feeling the most lively regret. Forgetting, or perhaps wanting fortitude to use the guiding clue by which she had formerly been accustomed

tomed to influence his opinions, she attempted to remonstrate, but was soon silenced by a reply which her enfeebled spirits could not support. She retired in tears.

The reader will not believe that Fitzosborne had been sincere in his wishes of effecting an entire reconciliation. It answered his purpose to bring the earl back, freed from his connection with Mrs. Harley; he had performed that undertaking, and taught the countess that she owed him an indelible debt of gratitude. He now generally left his lordship to that misery which must be the natural effect of a perturbed conscience and perplexed circumstances upon a mind which wanted wisdom to plan and fortitude to persevere in a system of economical retrenchment, or to efface error by sincere repentance. He saw with pleasure the gay, careless, generous

generous earl of Monteith, become gloomy, absent, morose, and penurious. He saw too, that the bottle was constantly applied to, not, as formerly, to be an auxiliary to mirth, but as an opiate to silence care. Affection could no longer bind the heart of Geraldine to such a partner. Continual provocation must weaken the claims of duty; and there needed nothing more than that himself should exhibit the full effect of contrast, by a display of the virtues most opposite to Monteith's vices, and to proceed in his design of enfeebling the power of religious principles, to render the unsuspecting countess his easy prey. Her opposition to what she thought the extreme rigidity of some of Miss Evans's opinions, and her tacit acquiescence with several of his tenets, convinced him, that he had made a considerable progress. He continued
silent

silent upon the subject of her lord's conduct. An air of pity and respect, mingled with the uniform attention of his manner, spoke a language far plainer than words.

CHAP. XXXVI.

I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments,
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.

MILTON.

I HAVE already observed, that miss Evans's impetuosity was of disservice to the noble cause which she conscientiously espoused ; and Fitzosborne, certain that her zeal would defeat her intentions, passed her in silence, as an enemy whom he could only render formidable by appearing to fear. But the cause of principle was now defended by the arrival of another champion. Mr. Powerscourt availed himself of the countess's invitation to chide his Lucy for a tyrannical exercise of female prerogative, in compelling him to take a journey of two hundred miles to whisper a love-tale which might have been more agreeably told

told in a little woodbine bower which she had erected, in strict conformity to the rules prescribed by her favourite poet Mason, in the parsonage garden at Powercourt. Henry had named it after the Nerina of that elegant bard, and decorated it with the following inscription and motto :

• I only begg'd a little woodbine bower ;
Nerina's bower, where I might sit and weep.

MASON'S ENGLISH GARDEN.

Wind, fragrant woodbine ! round Nerina's bower :
Clematis, deepen the umbrageous shade ;
And, mingling with the jas'mine's pensile flower,
Fulfil the wishes of the mourning maid.
Here oft, when evening sinks in soft repose,
Shall Mason's numbers wake the slumbering
grove :
Here, gentle Lucy shall recite the woes
Of orphan beauty and unhappy love.
As tasteful sympathy enjoys the theme,
Fancy, the local landscape shall extend ;
Bid Grecian fanes in dim perspective beam,
And Gothic arches mid the pine-trees bend.

Ye sportive fays, ye fine ethereal forms,
Nymphs of the sunbeam, sylphids of the breeze;
Defend their foliage from untimely storms,
From blasting mildew save these votive trees.
Here, on this verdant turf, the tyneful queen
With attic grace her deathless song renews;
And native virtues consecrate the scene,
Sacred to Lucy's taste, and Mason's muse.

The chidings of a sincere lover are rarely formidable; and Miss Evans had an excuse to plead, which would have disarmed a fiercer resentment than ever glowed upon any occasion in Henry's breast. In the same moment he forgave her flight, applauded her motives, and promised to assist her designs. "I
" knew Fitzosborne while I was in
" Italy," said he; "our acquaintance
" was but slight, yet I discovered
" enough to be convinced that he must
" be a dangerous inmate in any family."

But though Powerscourt possessed sufficient penetration to read the character

of a masked villain, Edward's profound discernment had for once led him to form an erroneous conclusion. The society in which he had met Henry was composed of persons whom the latter despised for their folly, or detested for their impiety ; and convinced, that even the argumentative powers of the unrivalled Grichton would be in vain exerted against wilful error, he determined, by not treating them with a dispute, to suffer them to enjoy their fading poppy-garlands uncontested. Fitzosborne had concluded, that the reason of his countryman's silence was his having nothing to say ; and he hailed the arrival of an antagonist at Monteith, whose speedy defeat would add to the already-exalted reputation which his scientific abilities had acquired among the rural esquires, feudal lairds, and officers in quarters, who

who frequented the earl of Monteith's table.

When Geraldine acquainted her friend with her cousin's expected arrival, his stile of commendation expressed his idea of his character. "O, Harry Pow-
"erscourt! I was acquainted with him
"abroad. A very honest, downright
"soul, with true English notions; he
"seemed always afraid of mixing with
"strangers. I shall be very happy to
"see him again, for I enjoyed his sin-
"cerity."

"He is an exception then to the
"general observation; for he is most
"honoured by those who best know
"him," said the countess. "*We*
"esteem him a good scholar, and a
"very sensible intelligent companion."

"A great deal, my dear madam,
"depends upon our confining ourselves
"to the strict definition of words, or

“ else our intentions are ambiguous. I
“ perceive that by my neglect of this
“ rule, you have mistaken mine. Mr.
“ Powerscourt has indisputably a very
“ good *plain* understanding, and I dare
“ say he is an excellent classical scholar.
“ But pardon me if I say he has never
“ stepped out of the beaten track, nor
“ attended to what I should call the
“ concatenation of deductions, or con-
“ secutive effect of given postulates;
“ and from this want of arrangement
“ in his mental faculties, it follows, of
“ course, that he takes things as they
“ are, without examining from what
“ causes the diseases in the moral and
“ natural world originate, or how they
“ may be remedied.”

The countess understood as much of this speech as the speaker intended she should ; and she could only lament her early inattention to logical studies, which
might

might have convinced her, as they had done Fitzosborne, that creation wanted to be new-modelled; and that the present age had more wisdom than all the preceding ones taken collectively.

The intended combatants now stood, like Homer's heroes, "panting for the fight," and impatient for the signal of engagement. Though the desire of victory alone would not have induced Powerscourt "to unlock his lips in such unhallowed air," the preservation of Geraldine from the snares of a seducer inspired him with a zeal warm even as that which Lucy Evans possessed. But being tempered by superior judgment, he determined to appear, as if he rather adopted an opinion from his observation of Fitzosborne's behaviour, than came with a predetermined resolution of disliking what he was expected to admire.

Aware that it is much easier to assail the opinions of others, than to bring forward a well-digested system of your own, Fitzosborne determined to commence the attack. An opportunity soon offered for him to point some of those contemptible but blasphemous sarcasms which pass for wit, against the Old Testament, which infidelity is now pleased to term an indefensible outwork of the popular theology. A scandalous tale of a married nobleman had found its way into a public paper; Fitzosborne pointed it out to Monteith by a significant glance, while he, with the pleasure common to offenders on discovering a companion in guilt, honoured the wretched jest with which the paragraph concluded with a hearty laugh.

“What has entertained you, my lord,” inquired the countess. “May we not partake of your mirth?”

Monteith

Monteith hastily replied, that it would not amuse her; and Edward, tossing the paper among the other publications of the day, sagaciously observed, that the conduct of the present age corresponded more with the practices recorded by the Jewish classics than with the precepts of their austere lawgiver. "The offences," continued he, "which seem to give eclat to those heroes who are recorded in the songs of their bards, are in their legislative code punishable with death, at least if we suppose these narrations literal. But we must allow, that the best critics, considering the allegorizing temper of those people, are led to believe, that the whole compass of their literature is fabulous, and by no means possessing that claim of high antiquity to which it pretends."

Henry's heart throbbed with indignation; but he determined to wait his opportunity of interposing when his audacious adversary was thrown off his guard. Warm with affectionate zeal for those truths from which her father had so often drawn instructive moral lessons, and the most august views of superintending Providence gradually unfolding its amazing designs, Miss Evans determined immediately to reply.

“It cannot,” thought she, “be any
“dereliction of female modesty and
“delicacy to show an infidel that
“women may be courageous in a sa-
“cred cause. Even my father's avowed
“opinion, that we ought to withdraw
“from controversial topics, would
“change with the exigency of the pre-
“sent case, which calls me to repel
“the attacks of profligacy and impiety
“united

“united for the destruction of my unsuspecting friend.”

Determined by these reflections, she addressed Fitzosborne: “How long, sir, have these sagacious critics succeeded in convincing the world that their stile of reasoning was just? My father has devoted his whole life to the attainment of sacred learning; and I have heard him say, that the attempts of sceptics served but to confirm the stability of that heaven-erected edifice which they sought to undermine.”

“The honour of an argument with Miss Evans,” returned Edward bowing, “is too great a novelty for me to decline embracing it; and I cannot but lament that I have not been previously prepared for the contest, by having obtained a knowledge of the arguments by which the superior
“judg-

“ judgment of Mr. Evans was decided.

“ I am myself a sincere friend to reli-

“ gion, anxious for its *real* rights, and

“ jealous of its *true* honour ; and as

“ such I have been tempted to wish

“ that some untenable points were fairly

“ given up, and that the profound the-

“ ologists of the present day would se-

“ lect those passages which bear stronger

“ marks of inspiration. I confess that

“ I have often felt mortified at seeing

“ the abilities of the order exerted in

“ the defence of those parts of the sys-

“ tem which were more prudently

“ abandoned by candid disputants.”

“ And I,” said Lucy, “ have been

“ mortified too, when I have seen reli-

“ gion degraded by a mock defence.”

Mr. Powerscourt exulted in the blush of honest indignation which glowed on his Lucy's cheek, and enjoyed the temporary confusion of her adversary. Fitz-
osborne

osborne soon recovered ; but, too much piqued to preserve the usual politeness of his manners, he begged Miss Evans to have the goodness to repeat her father's observations. They would, he was sure, be entitled to respect ; perhaps might operate to his conviction. Were they drawn from his perfect acquaintance with the Greek and Hebrew languages, or had he studied Syriac literature ?

“ I do not know,” said Lucy, sensible that this attack was designed to expose her.

“ From chronology, natural philosophy, or history ? But I believe, madam, you are yourself mistress of those sciences.”

Miss Evans's colour heightened with every interrogatory. There was a large party present, and she felt the cruelty of thus holding her out to general ridicule.

ridicule. She blamed her own temerity in having attacked a Proteus who could hide his native deformity in a thousand forms.

Henry felt her embarrassment too strongly not to relieve it. "Do not distress yourself, Miss Evans," said he, "by endeavouring to recollect your father's expressions. I had the happiness of being educated under his auspices, and I know the value of his opinion too well to withhold it from those who desire information."

"You were of Oxford, I think, sir," said Fitzosborne, disconcerted by the determined coolness of Henry's manner. "Several of my friends must have been your cotemporaries." He then enumerated a long list, in which he took care to include the most conspicuous young men of the age.

"My

“ My time,” said Henry, “ was
“ chiefly devoted to study, and I formed
“ few connections. Supposing myself
“ destined for orders, I applied closely
“ to the Greek and Hebrew languages,
“ and I made some progress in the Sy-
“ riac. I attended all the lectures on
“ natural philosophy, and am not un-
“ acquainted with history and chrono-
“ logy.” His enumeration of the very
topics on which Fitzosborne had ques-
tioned Lucy was rendered more signifi-
cant by the modulation of his voice.

Fitzosborne bowed, and expressed an
earnest wish to cultivate his acquaint-
ance. The bow was returned. “ I
“ thought, sir,” added Henry, “ that
“ you were solicitous to receive a little
“ information respecting those argu-
“ ments which induced Mr. Evans to
“ affirm, that investigation had proved
“ of inconceivable use in establishing
“ the

“ the authenticity of the Old Testament.”

“ I shall esteem it a particular favour if you would inform me,” replied Fitzosborne. “ Can you give me your company in the library for that purpose to-morrow morning ? The ladies will thank us for adjourning the debate for the present.”

“ I should conceive, sir,” said Powercourt, “ that the ladies are interested in the authenticity of their bibles ; and when any doubts are started, explanations should follow of course. By your calling forth a *lady* to debate these points, you must certainly join in my opinion, that the cause of inspiration is perfectly safe in the hands of that sex, who are accustomed to argue from the feelings of an unviolated heart, rather than from the
8 “ cold

“ cold deductions of the understand-
“ ing.”

“ No one,” resumed the evasive Fitz-
osborne, “ can have a greater respect
“ for female excellence than myself;
“ and before you profess yourself the
“ champion of sentiment, as opposed
“ to argumentative deductions, you
“ should soften the asperity which ap-
“ pears in your manner, by remember-
“ ing that I never attacked the fair.”

“ Not in a direct way, I believe,”
said Henry in a most animated voice,
and at the same time leading the eye
of his antagonist to the countess, who
sat netting near them, seemingly en-
grossed by some country visitors, but
really attentive to this conversation.

Edward felt struck as by an electri-
cal shock. Habitual reserve could not
prevent a sudden crimson from flush-
ing his face; and his quickly with-
drawn

drawn eye told a truth which he would willingly have concealed; namely, that he understood Powerscourt's allusion.

Unable to pursue a theme where discovery menaced every word, and precluded from the subterfuge which availed him in his former dispute with Mr. Evans, (I mean a reference of the argument to some future time, which it depended upon himself to procrastinate,) Fitzosborne must either have waited for Henry's attack on deistical principles, or have renewed his own charge against the authenticity of the scriptures. He chose the latter. He began to lead back the conversation by some flourishing compliments on the peculiar suitability of religion to the female character; and the impression which every thing supernatural and elevated always made upon the delicate organs of their imaginations. His zeal to *cor-*
rect

rect the sacred text—(he used the term *correct* upon the present occasion, in preference to his usual expressions of *reform* or *improve*)—proceeded from a sincere persuasion of the merits of several parts of the received canon, and a wish to expunge from it whatever might corrupt the delicacy of female readers, or harden their exquisite sensibility by the narration of some acts of more than savage brutality.

“ The simple manners and unrefined
 “ language of the earlier ages,” replied
 Henry, “ are recorded by their faithful
 “ historians in characters of undisguised
 “ veracity. Our ideas of decorum vary
 “ with the customs of the time and
 “ country ; but vice and virtue are sta-
 “ tionary. It may be a subject of re-
 “ gret, that translators who render au-
 “ thors of very remote antiquity should
 “ think themselves compelled to give
 “ a verbal

“ a verbal transcript of passages which
“ might be safely paraphrased; yet,
“ with respect to the bible, I observe,
“ that some of those interpreters who
“ profess to avoid the faults which many
“ years observation have discovered in
“ our present copy, have substituted a
“ sort of gay licentiousness in the place
“ of the objectional grossness, much
“ more offensive to the purity of the
“ heart. Respecting your second ob-
“ servation, as I do not recollect any
“ instance in which the vindictive spi-
“ rit of the Jews is pointed out to the
“ imitation of succeeding ages, I should
“ suppose their history might be studied
“ even in a critical or historical point
“ of view as an authentic monument
“ of ages but for inspiration wholly
“ obliterated, with less danger of ren-
“ dering the feelings obdurate, than the
“ page of Homer, or even the epic
“ labours

“labours of that champion of anti-
“christian liberality, Voltaire.”

“You forget,” said Fitzosborne triumphantly, “the merit annexed to the
“extirpation of the Canaanites, and
“the extinction of Amalek. Such
“pretended injunctions from the bene-
“ficent Parent of the universe are with
“me a conclusive proof against the *en-*
“*tire* inspiration of the Old Testa-
“ment.”

“I read in those commands,” replied Powerscourt, “an incontestable mark
“of Divinity. I recollect the state of
“society at that time, and I venerate
“the merciful severity which imprinted
“upon the minds of a small portion
“of mankind a renewed abhorrence
“of that cruel and degrading idolatry
“prohibited by one of the first com-
“mands which was imparted to the fa-
“ther of the Postdiluvian world. Sure-

“ly,

ly, *you*, sir, forget the maxim of a poet whose misdirected muse is often quoted by our present deists to establish principles from which he would have shrunk with horror. If

—The great first cause
 Acts not by partial but by general laws ;
 he is not bound by those rules of conduct which determine the equity of the actions of imperfect, short-sighted, perishable man. He, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, cannot be called upon by his creatures to answer for the operations of any of his instruments of punishment, be they famine, pestilence, or war. To fulfil some vast design, perfected perhaps centuries after its formation, the Jewish babe may bleed at Bethlehem, or the Calabrian infant be ingulphed with its parents by the desolating earthquake, without impeding

“peding the justice of the Creator,
“with whom a thousand years are but
“as a day. We finite creatures, stand-
“ing upon a little speck of time, can-
“not comprehend the plans of infin-
“tude, which extend to eternity. Ad-
“mit a future state, and every idea of
“particular severity vanishes. He who
“exists for ever can recompence the
“unoffending children of the idolatrous
“worshippers of Moloch with an happy
“immortality. He who knows the
“heart can crown with perpetual bliss
“the conscientious assertors of a de-
“clining persuasion, whom the more
“pestilent fanaticism of infidelity im-
“molated upon the banks of the Loire.
“The giver of eternal life can reward
“the patience he exercises, and amply
“repay the premature privation of tem-
“poral existence.”

The

The company listened with profound attention, roused by the solemn energy with which Mr. Powercourt delivered these sentiments. Miss Evans enjoyed the unaffected applause which appeared on every countenance. That of the lovely countess was lighted up by a most exhilarating smile, and her exulting heart whispered; "Edward fought conviction; surely he cannot resist the heavenly energy of Henry's heartfelt expressions." The conversation was not continued on this subject.

Eager to know if Fitzosborne's opinion of Powercourt had been changed by this dispute, Geraldine seized the earliest opportunity of asking him, if she had over-rated her kinsman's merits.

"Not in the least," was the reply. "He is certainly very eloquent, and he possesses some command of temper, a virtue rarely found among
" your

“ your keen disputants. But I need
“ not, lady Monteith, explain to your
“ sagacity the exact point in which I
“ could have pressed him, if politeness
“ would have permitted me to have con-
“ tinued the argument. His whole re-
“ ference is to infinitude and eternity,
“ terms of which we can form no
“ clear ideas. He gives no positive
“ proof, no mathematical demonstra-
“ tion of the inspiration which he tries
“ to infer from contested positions;
“ and till this is given by *our* school-
“ men, deism may always reply, that
“ inattention to those duties which are
“ merely prescribed by revelation, ad-
“ mits of some excuse, if we consider
“ the extreme doubt which attaches to
“ these subjects; for, if our present
“ code of religion may be true, it may
“ also be false.”

“ But

“ But is there not a great difficulty,
“ if not a total impossibility, of giving
“ the satisfactory proofs which you say
“ are required ?”

“ There, madam,” said Edward, “ is
“ unhappily the strong hold of scepti-
“ cism, of which all the powers of or-
“ thodoxy have not been able to dis-
“ possess it. It is pleaded, and certainly
“ with an air of reason, that if divine
“ intelligence really dictated what we
“ call revelation, it would carry with
“ it incontestable proofs of its origin by
“ silencing every objection, and enforc-
“ ing conviction upon every mind.”

Cowardly lady Monteith ! why, re-
strained by a fear of offending deter-
mined depravity, forbear affirming, that
the gift of reason was never intended
to supersede the practice of christian
graces ? It was intended to confirm and
assure that faith which shall one day be
changed

changed into certainty, to animate that hope which her boasted power could never clearly discover without divine guidance. Why fear to drive the mean dissimulator from the affected decency of deism into the bold audacity of atheism, by asking, how animated dust and ashes can presume to question the power which called it into existence, demanding, "Why hast thou made me what I am?" How intelligence confessedly finite can charge the councils of that mind which pervades infinitude and extends through eternity, with inconsistency in prescribing a rule of action to probationary beings, without at the same time compelling observance? Why forbear to inquire how his favourite free-will can consist with such a scheme of government? Nay, bid him not stop at the moral world; but say, why earth is not heaven, and man

an incorporeal essence, such as we believe the blessed inhabitants of that better region. Restrained by the growing attachment which, though confined within the strictest bounds that the specious affectation of Platonic affection could impose, and unacknowledged even to herself, certainly made Fitzosborne's approbation of consequence to her peace, lady Monteith forbore to oppose where she dreaded to offend; and she contented herself with wishing the mind of the most amiable of men to be relieved from those doubts which his conversations sometimes transfused into her own bosom.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Why, I can smile, and murder while I smile;
And cry, "Content" to that which grieves my
heart;
And wet my cheek with artificial tears;
And frame my face to all occasions.

SHAKESPEARE:

THE dispute which occupied the preceding Chapter was not the only instance of the triumph of manly sense and sound principle over sophistry, declamation, and hypocrisy. Conscious of his advantage, Mr. Powerscourt at every opportunity pursued infidelity into its retreats of falsehood. He exposed the credulity of disbelief, the inconsistency of scepticism, and the inconclusive futility of every argument which dared to set up Nature in opposition to its Author.

It was not with a hope of effecting any change in Fitzosborne that Henry thus continued to dare him to the "keen encounter of their wits;" he knew from incontestable authority, "that those who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," must constantly resist the elucidating ray of truth. It was the situation of the Monteiths which urged him to this continual warfare. He plainly saw the predilection of the countess, and the infatuation of her lord; and he vainly wished for that "warning voice" which might arouse them to a consciousness of their danger. He was not without hope too, that Edward's pride, mortified by repeated defeats, might provoke him to quit a residence which continual opposition must render disagreeable; and, stimulated by the enterprizing warmth of sincere friendship, he scarcely calculated

culated the chance of his being called out by a man, who, on some previous occasions, had proved himself to be

Jealous of honour, sudden and quick in quarrel;
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.

But the patience and humility which Edward exercised upon this occasion was as wonderful as his perseverance. Let not the Reader conclude that I give him credit for those virtues; for it cannot be supposed that he would adopt qualities which he esteemed to be weak imperfections. He used them only as the means which were sanctified by the proposed end. Taught by his recent defeat to abstain from attack, he contented himself with barely *attempting* a defence, when Powerscourt pressed him with some powerful inference; always taking care that something in his expression, look, or manner, should

should convey to the quick apprehension of Geraldine a hint of unfair treatment; an insinuation of his love of peace; and a complaint that his adversary began the debate, and that it was unjust to seek to deprive him of his own opinions, when he did not molest others in the quiet enjoyment of their peculiar notions.

Lady Monteith loved society, and few people were better calculated than herself to enjoy and impart the nameless delights of conversation. Whether we define it, according to the ideas of the Swan of Twickenham, to be "the feast of reason and the flow of soul;" or, personifying its exhilarating graces, describe it in the likeness of Milton's Euphrosyne, "bucksome, blithe, and debonaire," yet still the associate of "unreproved pleasure;" in whichever shape the goddess presides, the irritating spirit
of

of contradiction, and the scowling genius of continual argument, must be proscribed admission, or the sweets of the mental banquet will be soured by fermentation. The relaxing mind cannot repose upon the bosom of confidence, and pour forth all its choicest stores, when every expression rouses the clamour of opposition. The dimpled smile of sportive mirth is too timid to encounter the austere aspect of declamatory investigation.

Such were the reflections of Geraldine, who, driven by conjugal infelicity to seek amusement out of herself, had fondly hoped that the most refined social pleasures would result from the friends of her early youth meeting with the accomplished intelligent Fitzosborne. She had anticipated the delights of literary conversation, the coruscations of playful wit; and, while she enjoyed

with sincere pleasure the prospect of her Lucy's happiness, she determined to divert herself with the little awkwardnesses which the presence of a beloved object generally gives to the manner of a young woman possessed of a delicate susceptible mind. Instead of these expected luxuries, the demon of Dispute took possession of the dining-room and the saloon; accompanied their walks and rides, their fishing-parties and mountain tours; and, instead of leaving the mind of the countess at liberty to entertain her guests with something enchantingly whimsical or negligently elegant, her anxiety was perpetually exercised to repress every topic of discourse which threatened contention.

Perhaps Geraldine overcharged this description. She was also mistaken in fixing the whole blame of this controversial spirit upon Henry. More accustomed

customed to Edward's style of conversation, and less aware of its tendency, he could at any time drop the gage of defiance without arresting her attention, till the reply of his antagonist called her to divert the rising storm. Her insensibility of her own danger, and consequent ignorance of the conscientious motives which urged Mr. Powercourt to violate the prescribed rules of good breeding strictly adhered to in polished society, precluded her from framing any excuses in his justification. That eternal gratitude which she had promised to preserve for the generous friend who had sacrificed his own happiness to her's, imperceptibly abated, as the conviction that she had founded her hopes of connubial felicity on a wrong basis gathered strength. On the other hand, the recent services of Fitzosborne, and the marked contrast between him and

her lord, hourly made a deeper impression ; and her disapprobation of what she thought cavalier behaviour increased her indifference for the society of Lucy and her lover. Real esteem could not be weakened ; but affection sensibly declined, at least so far as to make her wish them married and happily settled at Powerscourt.

Geraldine's estrangement from her once-loved friends could not be attributed to Mr. Fitzosborne's *suggestions*. However poignantly his feelings might be wounded, he was too generous to complain ; and respect for the relation of his fair friend withheld him from answering his persecutor as most gentlemen would do. As some of his own notions had a tendency to democracy, he could not consistently hint the humble situation of Henry's father, as a reason why his son was unfit to mix with

with men of rank. Beside, he recollected that he had passed through the purifying ordeal of a college education, which always consumes every particle of plebeian infection ; and that he could not cast an oblique censure on his origin without involving the reputation of the high-seated Powerscourt ancestry. He therefore never uttered a sarcasm of the kind ; nay he even once attempted to soften Geraldine's displeasure, who confessed herself to be a little hurt at her cousin's behaviour, by observing, that Mr. Powerscourt's early connections might not have led him into very polished society, and that habit was an irresistible enemy to that amenity of manners which marked the gentleman.

But though thus cautious with respect to the countess, the daring genius of Fitzosborne winged a bolder flight with her credulous lord. He too retained but a

faint remembrance of the merit of the self-denying, accommodating rival, who had resigned the girl he loved to his happier vows. He forgot the dejection and subsequent illness which spoke the anguish of the sacrifice; and no longer finding, that the possession of that blessing which the generous Henry reluctantly resigned had confirmed his own happiness, he was prepared to look upon him as he would upon any other guest, and to regulate his behaviour to him, not by a sense of gratitude or esteem, but by the present amusement he received from his conversation. I have sufficiently explained lord Monteth's character for my readers to anticipate my confession, that his powers of discrimination were very limited. In fact, hating controversy, which he not unaptly called quarrelling, if he could not contrive, by playing with his dogs
or

or his children, to make sufficient noise to prevent himself from hearing the dispute, he rang the bell for his horses and took a ride.

He had pursued this method twice before the hint was understood, a sufficient excuse for the total loss of patience which followed. Deceived by his own impetuosity, and some insinuations of Fitzosborne, he mistook the part which the countess acted upon these occasions, which was generally that of a mediatrix; for, though inclination led her to join with Edward, especially when he more nicely affected the plausible, yet if Henry, by pressing his arguments close, surprised his opponent into the avowal of some bold tenets, Geraldine could not refrain from expressing her approbation of the champion of steady principle. Lord Monteith once entered the room, when every tongue was loud
in

in declaiming against some positions which Fitzosborne had just attempted to maintain on the subject of education. They were, that as it is presumptuous to assert, that obedience to parents is any thing more than the preference of reason enforced by affection, the child ought to lead its own studies, and the parent or instructor follow; for youth should enjoy perfect liberty, and be led to knowledge not by authority, but by inclination. His lordship had no disposition to give himself the trouble of understanding the debate. He heard something of the cruelty of debarring innocent infants of the liberty with which nature had endowed them, and he saw every one united in condemning Fitzosborne. He was an advocate for children enjoying themselves, and he never either restrained or corrected his own, except when they interrupted his particular
pur-

pursuits. He was, beside, strongly impelled to support Fitzosborne, who was now become absolutely necessary to him in the double capacity of a flatterer and an adviser.

The earl took a chair; obtained the lead in conversation; and soon made himself master of the field by silencing all opposition. He cast a look of triumph round him. "What," said he to Geraldine, "have you not one word left to defend your opinion? You was haranguing very learnedly, and laying down a system of management which you meant to adopt—with James, I suppose; but as I may not converse with you upon this subject again, I would advise you to give it up, for I shall never allow it. You have broke the spirit of the poor girls already by your lessons and your
"punish-

“punishments; and I shall educate the
“boy according to my own plan.”

The countess answered by an acquiescent smile; but his lordship had talked himself into a fit of indignation, which some domestic perplexities secretly increased. He arose, and, giving his chair rather a whirl than a push, stalked out of the room.

Every one who has witnessed little conjugal rencontres knows, that it is the business of bystanders to take no notice of the passing scene, but to exert their happiest address to divert the attention of the parties engaged to some new subject. Geraldine's starting tears were repressed by Lucy's observing, that an uncommonly beautiful butterfly rested upon the chimney-piece; and at the same instant Henry called her to remark the characteristic style of excellence which distinguished Titian's paintings. Fitz-
osborne

osborne was lost in dejected silence. He however rose, as if to examine the picture which Henry had pointed out; and fancying his attention engrossed by the butterfly hunt, which Miss Evans enlivened by a hundred humorous observations, he whispered to the still-agitated countess, as he passed her; "Dear suffering meekness! shall I follow him, and try to calm his savage frenzy?" she faintly articulated, "Yes," and her champion instantly withdrew. A thought that moment struck the countess, that his interposition might add to the passion which quiet self-reflection would best subdue. The colours of nature or of Titian could no longer give a transitory diversion to the pangs of thought. The hitherto restrained tears burst from her eyes, and she hastily flew after Fitzosborne.

"That

“That man is a villain,” said Henry to his Lucy, who was now the only person remaining with him in the room.

“I never doubted it,” said she, relinquishing the just-vanquished butterfly.

“But have you any fresh proofs?” Powerscourt repeated the whisper which he had distinctly overheard.

“O my lovely, enchanting Geraldine, how perilous is thy situation!” exclaimed Miss Evans; “between a husband insensible of thy virtues, and a pretended friend who is determined to undermine them!”

“And how fatally insensible of her danger!” continued Powerscourt.

“Are there no means to save her?”

“I have tried what to my judgment appeared to be the most probable, and I have pursued them beyond the bounds which regard for the decorum of my own character would have

“ have imposed. I have clearly de-
“ tected his principles, and, I sometimes
“ hope, armed the countess against their
“ seductive poisons. But I cannot re-
“ move him from Monteith. He en-
“ dures my persecution with a patience
“ which convinces me that he will not
“ be provoked to retreat ; and I have
“ no influence either with the earl or
“ Geraldine. What can prevent her
“ from every day, nay every hour,
“ perceiving the strong contrast between
“ his soft, insinuating, polished manner,
“ and the inconsistent, uninformed,
“ I had almost said cruel, deportment
“ of her much-altered lord? You
“ see, Edward himself draws the pa-
“ rallel.”

“ And our beloved friend feels it,”
added Lucy. “ Can there be a stronger
“ proof of his designs than the whisper
“ which you just overheard?”

“ Yes,”

“ Yes,” replied Powercourt, “ there
“ is a stronger. She is lovely and at-
“ tractive as fancy ever feigned. And
“ what shall induce that man to resist
“ the power of her charms, who has
“ silenced the restraints of conscience,
“ who fears no future retribution, and
“ who has sufficient cunning to elude
“ the pecuniary punishments which our
“ laws award to his licentious crimes?
“ Hourly exposed to the blaze of Ge-
“ raldine’s perfections, indulged by a
“ credulous husband with every oppor-
“ tunity for seducing her honour, he
“ must feel the fascination of her beauty
“ and her merit. Nay, his attentions
“ prove, even to casual observers, that
“ he does feel them. My right hand
“ neighbour at the earl’s last public
“ dinner asked me, ‘ Who is this Mr.
“ Fitzosborne?’ I told him an admirer
“ of lady Arabella Macdonald. ‘ I am
“ very

“very glad to hear that,” said the blunt inquirer; “for we country people
“fancied he made love to the countess.”

Lucy determined to tell her friend this story, and Powerscourt approved the suggestion. “Be careful, however,” said he; “alarm her delicacy, but not
“her pride. Convince her, that it is
“only *strangers* that can doubt her
“rectitude; that she owes the immediate
“dismissal of Fitzosborne to the
“judgment of the world, not to the
“opinions of those friends who know
“her worth, and who deem it almost
“impossible that she should fall.”

“And so it is,” said Miss Evans with energy. “I defy all the traitor’s arts
“to allure her to wilful guilt. She cannot
“feel any real predilection in his
“favour.”

“Ah, Lucy,” interrupted Henry,
“we soon cease from the per-
“cuting
15

“cutting attentions which we find *dis-*

“*please* the object of our pursuit.”

Lucy asked him whether he learned that maxim of her or Geraldine; and the conversation changed to a more agreeable topic.

In the mean time lady Monteith had overtaken Fitzosborne, and, finding her persuasions to induce him to abandon his design of reproving her lord for his petulance ineffectual, she extorted from him an engagement, that he would act with the gentlest caution. This agreement, like the promises of the weird sister to the guilty Thane of Cawdor, was “kept to the ear but broken to the sense.” The caution was exercised for his own security, and the gentleness was the refined covering of simulation.

He had that day made himself master of a secret, the discovery of which would, he knew, point the whole torrent

rent of the earl's fretful impatience against the countess and Mr. Powercourt. I have frequently stated, that lord Monteith's natural character strongly partook of generosity and benevolence. These noble sensations, blunted by selfishness and inconsideration, were now effectually chilled by the embarrassments attendant on perplexed circumstances; and his irritable temper was continually fretted by the representations of his agents, and the solicitations of his creditors. It was to some harassing occurrences of this nature, that his late behaviour to the countess must be ascribed; and the moment he left the room, his sense of her meek sufferance added to his torment. He flung himself upon the bank of the canal which wound round the menagerie, and was beginning to yield to that tranquillity of mind which the warbling birds,

birds, the waving trees, and the calm splendour of a mild autumnal sun, inspired, when Fitzosborne seated himself by his side.

“ When do you cut a communication between this canal and the lake ?” inquired he. The earl only answered by a profound sigh.

“ You told me,” resumed his tormentor, “ that you had such a design. You also mentioned your intention of levelling a small eminence which intercepts your view of the Gramplan hills.”

Stung by the recollection of those plans of princely magnificence by which he had once intended to embellish the seat of his ancestors, lord Monteith could only answer by execrating the dice-box.

“ My good friend,” said Fitzosborne, “ why persist in teasing yourself with
“ useless

“ useless recollections of past misfortunes? Let us look forward to the future. You have noble expectations. Sir William Powercourt cannot in the course of nature live long.—But I believe I should not have entered upon that painful subject.”

Lord Monteith, who at that instant felt the misery of straitened circumstances too strongly to regard with sorrow the death of an old man who would leave him a handsome fortune, inquired, why he should think it such a painful event? “ There is a great deal of whimsical goodness about the old baronet,” added he; “ but people cannot live for ever.”

“ I did not suspect you of the puerility of grieving for his death,” said Edward smiling. “ I allude to the awkward circumstances in which you will be placed at his demise.”

“ Is coming into the possession of
“ five thousand a-year an awkward cir-
“ cumstance?”

“ No; but I think I should not like
“ to be the mere steward of my wife
“ and children. I should rather like
“ to have the expenditure directed by
“ myself.”

“ And who else will direct it?” in-
quired the earl, raising himself from
the ground.

“ Possibly you may have some influ-
“ ence over the part which is settled
“ upon your daughter or your unborn
“ son; but the two thousand a year
“ which the countess disposes of will
“ be totally diverted from your
“ purse.”

“ Why, what does she mean to do
“ with it?”

“ Are you really ignorant of her de-
“ signs then? I must have been mis-
“ informed.”

“informed.” Repeated entreaties drew from Fitzosborne what he now termed a mere guess of his own, arising from the peculiar warmth of the countess in her friendships; namely, that it was intended to increase the opulence of Mr. Powerscourt and his bride. Then, looking attentively on the earl, he inquired what “bloody passion shook his very frame;” and he entreated him not to be discomposed at his idle suppositions; at least, to pass the matter in silence till it was better confirmed. My lord promised; but his behaviour to Mr. Powerscourt became, in consequence, so strikingly inhospitable, that the latter soon found himself compelled to leave a family, in which, independent of his attachment to his Lucy, the liveliest feelings of his heart were now centered.

Instead of obtruding his keen sense of Monteith's extraordinary behaviour upon the observation of the countess, he contrived to give his departure the air of choice; and he declined with an air of regret rather than pique Geraldine's faint invitation to spend another week with them. He had, however, entrusted Miss Evans with his real sentiments. "I am convinced," said he, "that the earl is but the puppet of the treacherous Fitzosborne on this occasion. There are some masterly but diabolical machinations on foot which I cannot develop. My continuing here can be of no service; indeed it is impossible, considering the treatment which I hourly experience. No effort of mine could shake the confidence which this credulous tool of subtle villany reposes in the betrayer of his peace. Be
" you,

“ you, therefore, my Lucy, the Guar-
“ dian angel, and watch over your
“ much-endangered, too confident
“ friend. I know your zeal and your
“ unshaken fidelity ; but I fear you will
“ be called upon for exertions which
“ will put your fortitude to the severest
“ trial. Endure the altered looks of
“ your Geraldine ; even brave her re-
“ sentment. Remember, that she is
“ now labouring under the impulse of
“ a fatal delusion, and that her return-
“ ing reason must bless the hand which
“ snatches her from destruction.”

“ I know, Henry,” replied Lucy,
“ that I shall continually want your
“ directing judgment. O that we had
“ her safe at Powerscourt ! How would
“ we join to pour the balm of friend-
“ ship on her wounded soul !”

“ Cannot you,” said Henry, “ plead
“ a little pardonable caprice, and say

“ you have made a resolution not to
“ confirm my happiness till the dear
“ companion of our youth is present,
“ to see your father knit the solemn
“ bond which will make you for ever
“ mine?”

“ I know not,” cried Lucy, giving
her hand to her lover with a faint
smile, “ what folly I would not affect
“ to save my Geraldine.”

C H A P. XXXVIII.

Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
The sister's vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the tardy footed time
For parting us; O and is all forgot?
All school-days friendship, childhood innocence?—
And will you rend our ancient love asunder?

SHAKESPEARE.

IT is a general observation, that ceremony increases as affection declines. Conscious of the unkindness which we blush to avow, we poorly attempt to disguise our inconstancy by a parade of words, without considering that we betray our hypocrisy by a scrupulous regard to those minutiae, to which, while our hearts glowed with real regard, we were too much occupied to attend.

In proportion as lady Monteith felt the pleasure she took in Miss Evans's
I 4 society

society really diminish, she was more observant in her hospitable attentions, not with a view to deceive, but from the more generous motive of wishing to avoid giving pain. Though she would not have felt any uneasiness to have seen her accompany Henry back to Caernarvonshire, she expressed a lively sense of her Lucy's goodness in remaining. She was ever fearful at dinner that her friend was not taken good care of; and though Miss Evans had made repeated visits to Monteith, it now first occurred to the countess, that there was an impropriety in lodging her in one of the turret chambers, though the primary reason for doing so had been, that it was the nearest to her own.

Lucy experienced all the trials which Henry had predicted; but she recollected, that she had determined to endure them. "Let the worst come,"
said

said she, "that my fears predict, her
 " heart can never be vitiated. The
 " moment the seducer pulls off the
 " mask, she will detect him; and as
 " the delusion vanishes, her susceptible
 " heart will recal those *real* friends
 " who strove to snatch her from de-
 " struction."

Vice is never secure, even when tri-
 umphant. Let earth and hell conspire
 to favour its designs, nothing is so mean,
 nothing so cowardly as guilt. The re-
 moval of Powerscourt was a grand point
 gained; but the watchful, fearless, de-
 termined Lucy remained; and though
 Fitzosborne perceived her influence
 hourly decline, he felt her presence to
 be an impediment to his concluding
 machinations. He could not banish
 her, as he had done Henry, by the
 agency of the earl; for the whim of
 the moment always predominated with

that nobleman. The inconveniences which he fancied he suffered from a controversial propensity, produced his resolution of driving his guest from Monteith; and though the suspicion, that Henry was intended to inherit a large portion of sir William's estate gave that determination immediate action, it was considered separately as a circumstance which lord Monteith's generosity would have entirely disregarded in a less embarrassed state of his own affairs. He well knew that Miss Evans was intended to share in his lady's liberality; but she was less objectionable to him, on the important account of her never attempting a formal argument. He detested long harangues; but a piquant retort was his delight, and she was peculiarly happy at repartee. Her sprightly unaffected manner, and comparative ignorance of fashionable life,

amused

amused him ; and she had long borne him a degree of affection as being the husband of her friend. She esteemed his good qualities ; and her concern for the delusion under which he laboured induced her to be even more than usually attentive to his humour, and indulgent to his follies.

But though Fitzosborne was thus compelled to leave Monteith out of his counsel, and Lucy refused to read a wish for her removal in the sickly sunshine of her Geraldine's languid smiles, he resolved, that other means should expedite her departure. A project was therefore contrived. The evening before its completion, lord Monteith had devoted to his increasing love for Bacchanalian indulgences. The hour was late, but madeira and burgundy preserved their attractions. The joyous party had sent excuses to the countess

for not joining her in the saloon; and Geraldine, after supporting a languid evening with her two friends, (for Fitzosborne had early pleaded indisposition as a reason for leaving the noisy Anacreontics,) retired to her own apartment.

She was here encountered by her favourite attendant, who with much reluctance, and many assurances that she would not have taken such a liberty, but that she really had already advanced all her own money to the distressed parties, presented a petition from the workmen who had been employed in laying the foundation of the amphitheatre which was begun in the park. They were now reduced to the last distress, not only by an unexpected dismissal from their employment, but by the non-payment of wages already due. Maria declared, that her father and brothers

thers were of the number; and the many anecdotes of authentic suffering which she recited, and traced to this culpable remissness, swelled the feeling heart of Geraldine with indignation and pity. "My lord," said she, "promised to pay all the bills immediately, as some compensation for the disappointment I caused the workmen, by giving up the design before they had finished the work they had contracted to execute. It must be the steward's fault. Is he up? I will speak to him immediately."

"There was a light in his office when your ladyship rang the bell."

"Desire him to come up stairs. But no; he is very old and infirm; I will go to him."

The result of the conversation was not at all to the countess's satisfaction. She found that the delay was wholly attributable

tributable to her lord, who had insisted that the appropriated sums should be transmitted where the claims were less just, but more clamorous. The steward mentioned many other circumstances which increased her agitation, and he answered her earnest solicitations that these bills might be immediately discharged, by pleading that it was totally impossible to advance what was not in his possession.

Geraldine returned towards her own apartment, ruminating on what measures she could pursue, and determining privately to dispose of some of her mother's jewels, rather than that the helpless babes of the labourer should want bread. While she was crossing the gallery leading from the stair-case, the loud but indistinct noise of catches and glees inarticulately sung, and interrupted by applauding clamours, or reproving

proving oaths, issued from the banquet-
ing room. She stopped for a moment,
and fancied that she heard Monteith's
voice. "Has he then," said she, "lost
" all the feelings of humanity, as well
" as all sense of refined pleasure? Com-
" passion, nay justice demands, that
" the waste of riot should have been ap-
" propriated to nobler ends."

Her eye then glanced towards the
library, which was at the end of a suite
of rooms opposite to where she stood.
The door was open, and she saw Fitzos-
borne sit with a book in his hand in a
posture of fixed attention. She never
felt the power of contrast so strong be-
fore; and a momentary impulse almost
tempted her to tear from her finger the
witness of that bond which had sealed
her misery.

Still Fitzosborne continued to read,
and Geraldine, leaning over the ba-
lustrade,

lustrade, still alternately looked and listened. "O splendid wretchedness!" said she, gazing on the marble figures which decorated the stair-case, and the richly carved roof, now rendered more conspicuous by the coloured lamps which hung from every pediment; "the lonely villager, whom we abridge
" in his scanty enjoyments, curses this
" parade of luxury; and the curses of
" the injured will one day come into
" judgment against their proud op-
" preffors."

Still indulging her melancholy feelings, the countess contemplated the composure of Fitzosborne's looks. "All
" must be right," said she, "in his
" bosom. He is neither tortured by
" remorse nor fear; and can what I
" have heard of the sceptic's wretched
" state be just? Perhaps at this mo-
" ment I should feel some consolation
" in

“ in thinking, that the great Author of
“ the universe is too much engrossed
“ by his own perfections to take cog-
“ nizance of things below; for then I
“ need not fear his avenging the wrongs
“ of indigence.” At that instant the cries
of her little son in the nursery threw her
thoughts into a different train. “ Ah!
“ my poor babes,” resumed she, “ what-
“ ever is my own lot, a mother must,
“ for your sakes, hope that there is a
“ *special* Providence to protect your
“ helpless infancy.”

Fitzosborne now rose, and, advancing towards her, interrupted her musings. “ For Heaven’s sake, dearest
“ lady Monteith! what keeps you up
“ at this late hour?”—“ My sorrows,”
replied the countess, bursting into tears.

“ I hoped,” returned Edward, affectionately pressing her hand, “ that they
“ were hushed in oblivion. Permit me
“ to

“ to lead you from the hearing of these
“ offensive revellers. It is too shocking
“ to refined delicacy like yours.”

Geraldine inquired where they should go? and Fitzosborne proposed the garden. “ The Comus of this place will
“ not lead his band of wassailers there,” said he. “ The meaner organs of these
“ satyrs are only capable of enjoying
“ the grossest animal gratifications.
“ Pardon my allusion. I have just
“ been enraptured by the sublime bard’s
“ description of revel jollity. How different
“ is the brutal vociferation which
“ we hear from the serapturous ideas :

“ Braid your locks with rosy twine,
“ Dropping odours, dropping wine,
“ Rigour now is gone to bed,
“ And Advice with scrupulous head.
“ By dimpled brook, and fountain brim,
“ The Wood-Nymphs deckt with daisies trim,
“ Their merry wakes and pastimes keep :
“ What hath night to do with sleep ?”

His

His further quotation was here interrupted by the appearance of Miss Evans, who, declaring the evening was much too beautiful to think of going to bed, proposed joining them in their excursion into the garden. They took a short and silent turn under the colonade, and then retired to their apartments.

The countess very soon after perceived that Miss Evans was at her chamber-door. "I am haunted, my dear Geraldine," said she, "by some very disagreeable company; my own thoughts I mean. Will you allow me to lose them for one hour, by conversing with you?" Lady Monteth desired her maid to retire, and the two friends sat for a few moments gazing at each other in expressive silence.

Miss Evans first spoke: "There was a time, my Geraldine, when our full-
" fraught

“fraught hearts never wanted a subject
“for conversation. That confidence is
“past, I see; yet I will neither lament
“nor complain. But for your own, for
“your dear children’s sake, let not any
“recently-discovered fault in me induce
“you to flight the important discov-
“eries that I can reveal. My anxiety
“for your little boy, who is not quite
“well, brought me this night to wit-
“ness a fuller confirmation of Fitzos-
“borne’s villany.”

“What villany?” inquired Geraldine with an unaltered countenance.

“He placed himself purposely in the library, that you might see him.”

“What then?”

“I firmly believe too, that the banqueting-room door was set open by his order, that you might hear the confusion.”

“And

“ And was not lord Monteith most
“ to blame to cause that confusion?”

“ I do not vindicate my lord. O,
“ my fainted mother! if I could but
“ breathe the energy of thy discerning
“ spirit into my dear unsuspecting
“ friend——”

“ I never knew that Mrs. Evans
“ thought suspicion a virtue.”

“ She never would have suffered an
“ audacious man to have offended her
“ ears with reflections on my father’s
“ conduct. Though mild, and pa-
“ tient of reproofs to herself, her quick
“ susceptibility of his honour——”

“ You surely do not recollect,” in-
terrupted lady Monteith, “ that the
“ comparison you have started is most
“ exquisitely painful to me. I will only
“ say, that the regularity of your fa-
“ ther’s conduct disproved slander. Do
“ *you* draw the inference.” The tears
which

which at that instant streamed from her eyes avowed her tortured heart.

“ My sweetest Geraldine! can I witness those tears, and not wish to relieve thy sorrows?”

“ Then seek not to deprive me of my only friend.”

“ Your *only* friend! How is your style of expression changed! What then am I? what is Henry Powercourt?”

“ Both strangely altered by unjust suspicions.”

“ Our suspicions are not pointed at you. We know that you are pure, and guiltless of the smallest *intentional* fault. We grieve to see your candour betrayed, your unsuspecting innocence ensnared, your reputation blasted.”

“ My reputation blasted, Miss Evans?
“ Are you not cruel in referring to a
“ slanderous

“ slanderous tale, invented by envy
 “ and falsehood, which you once told
 “ me my conduct sufficiently dis-
 “ proved?”

“ No! no! my heart is a stranger to
 “ designed cruelty to any one, and
 “ least of all to you. It is not to the
 “ attacks of malignity, it is to the con-
 “ clusions of guileless simplicity, that I
 “ refer. She then repeated the observ-
 “ ations which were addressed to Mr.
 “ Powerscourt at the public dinner.”

“ Must I then,” said the countess,
 “ clear my character to the world by
 “ throwing treble odium upon my
 “ lord’s? or, must I renounce the only
 “ companion who seems studious to
 “ sweeten the bitter cup of anguish
 “ which I now drain to the dregs?
 “ Am I to publish the obligations
 “ which I owe to Fitzosborne? obli-
 “ gations which would justify me
 “ in every one’s opinion; or sit
 “ a lone,

“ a lone, solitary, flighted being in this
 “ magnificent prison?”

Lucy now melted into tears. “ Does
 “ your palace, your bower of bliss, as
 “ you once styled it, now receive that
 “ appellation? O! what has wrought
 “ this dreadful change? It is not quite
 “ a twelvemonth since your own dear
 “ hand-writing to me traced these strong
 “ expressions. ‘ I enjoy as much hap-
 “ piness as experience teaches us to ex-
 “ pect in this uncertain world. I pos-
 “ sess my husband’s affectionate confi-
 “ dence, the esteem of my friends, the
 “ love of my dependants. With what
 “ heart-felt transport, my Lucy, do I
 “ tell you, that lord Monteith seems
 “ every hour more firmly attached to
 “ me and his children. You know his
 “ manner is singular. It once gave me
 “ pain, but reflection has reconciled
 “ me to it, and I discover, even in his

“ eccen-

“eccentricities, indubitable marks of
“an excellent heart.’ Do not wring
“your hands, my love! I do not re-
“cite this passage to awaken your
“poignant feelings, but to convince
“your judgment.”

Miss Evans paused; the countess was unable to speak, and she proceeded.

“Can all this ruin originate from
“chance? Can your lord withdraw
“his affection, his confidence, nay
“even treat you with severity, without
“some tempter? Trust me, my Ge-
“raldine, if Fitzosborne were indeed
“your friend, the influence which he
“so eminently possesses over your im-
“petuous lord must be apparent and
“produce the most opposite behaviour.”

“In what,” said Geraldine, recovering herself, “do you perceive this
“influence? does lord Monteith ever

“ coincide with Fitzosborne’s senti-
“ ments ?”

“ Rather say, does he ever oppose
“ them? Fitzosborne is too subtle to
“ let me ever hear his *real* sentiments;
“ but I read them reflected in the un-
“ disguised countenance of your lord.
“ His eye continually watches his art-
“ ful favourite, a proof that he feels his
“ influence. He is not only warm and
“ uniform in his approbation of Fitz-
“ osborne, but his behaviour is marked
“ by a degree of respect and deference
“ which I never observed him to show
“ to any one else, except to you in
“ those happy days when you reigned
“ the undisputed sovereign of his heart.
“ You, who knew the gentle clue by
“ which he was imperceptibly led to
“ comply with your wishes, must know,
“ that the delicate management which
“ his

“ his temper requires can only be visible to others by its effect.”

“ For what purpose should Edward wish for this ascendancy over lord Monteith?” inquired the countess.

“ In my opinion for the most diabolical purpose—to alienate his heart from you, and to induce him to treat you with such unkindness, as may subvert, in your mind, those sentiments of affection and esteem which, next to the principles of duty and honour, form the strongest guards of female purity. Nay, hear me one moment more! Every audacious whisper which he utters against your husband, every look of artificial tenderness by which he dares to recommend *himself*, are employed to batter down the same defence, while his atheistical insinuations tend to repress the compunctions of conscience,

“ science, and to weaken that principle of religion upon which your safety principally depends.”

“ Before you draw such harsh conclusions, Miss Evans,” said the offended countess, “ you should describe what parts of my conduct will, in your opinion, expose me to the indignity of a licentious address. I must also add, that as your judgment of Mr. Fitzosborne seems to be too decided to be the mere result of suspicion, I have a right to bid you *prove*, that he feels for me a bolder sentiment than pity or esteem. If he is what you describe, instead of being the ornament of society, he is its disgrace.”

“ Do recollect,” replied Lucy, “ that I give him credit for the deepest contrivance, the most profound artifice. I am not in his confidence. The
“ only

“ only positive proofs which I can bring
“ against him are, your present wretchedness,
“ his influence both over lord
“ Monteith and yourself, and his avowed
“ infidelity.”

“ You and Mr. Powercourt have
“ ever given that harsh name to a singularity
“ of opinion which your candid father only *suspected* of leaning to
“ deism. All doubt with you appears
“ to be a crime, and a dissent from
“ your notions on some important but
“ mysterious point subjects your ill-fated
“ opponent to the most confirmed
“ imputation of the blackest guilt, even
“ though his whole previous conduct
“ evinces a course of almost unflinching
“ rectitude and exemplary virtue.”

“ O my Geraldine! I will urge you
“ but this once more. Is it from himself
“ that you hear of this unflinching
“ rectitude and shining virtue? His
K 3 “ character

“ character is comparatively unknown
“ in his own country. Abroad it was
“ esteemed to be far from immaculate.
“ His constant associates were men of
“ loose principles and profligate man-
“ ners.

“ Is it from Henry Powerscourt that
“ you learned this catalogue of vices ?”
inquired Geraldine with a resentful
air.

“ It is,” returned Lucy. “ It is
“ from that Henry Powerscourt whom
“ we both so tenderly esteem ; the
“ dear companion of our early happy
“ years, those years of confidence,
“ tranquillity, and mutual affection.
“ O lady Monteith ! how exquisitely
“ painful is that reflection now. Hear
“ me yet on my bended knees ; hear
“ my solemn request. Mine is no
“ display of officious zeal, no false co-
“ louring of a hollow heart. If I have
“ erred,

“ erred, it is from a mistaken judg-
“ ment; and punish me as that crime
“ deserves. Yet, my ever beloved
“ friend! do not let your confidence
“ in your own discernment lead you
“ into danger. It is not because I sus-
“ pect your virtue that I thus im-
“ pressively warn you; but it is because
“ I consider you to be surrounded with
“ snares which, without divine protec-
“ tion, no mortal can escape; and
“ to that protection I commend you in
“ my most earnest prayers.”

Vanquished by this affectionate appeal, Geraldine raised her Lucy, and folded her in her arms. The reconciliation was as sincere as it was affecting. The countess protested, that though she could not adopt her opinions of a man whom she had studied with unremitting attention, she yet gave entire credit to the sincerity of her mo-

tives ; and Miss Evans hoped, that the communication, which had somewhat relieved her burdened mind, would not be entirely forgotten in the hours of calm reflection. They then parted, after mutually engaging to name this affecting subject no more.

Miss Evans's thoughts were diverted the next morning to a subject yet more poignantly distressing, and which, as the master-sorrow, swallowed up every other care. A letter from her father's house-keeper announced, that he was alarmingly ill, and requested her immediate presence at Powerscourt. This letter flung her into such violent emotions, that she had not self-command sufficient to reflect upon some very extraordinary circumstances which accompanied it. The style and the writing were greatly superior to Mrs. Mary's usual performances. This was, indeed, accounted
for

for in the postscript, which stated, that being ashamed of her *poor scrawl*, she had got the clerk to copy it, and to rectify the spelling. The excuse was more conspicuous than the writing; for Mrs. Mary and the clerk were not upon good terms, and it seemed extraordinary, that a faithful confidential servant should think of such minute explanations when a beloved master lay in the utmost danger, and requiring all her active services. Where too was Henry? Was it not natural for him to write to his Lucy? and how improbable, that he should permit another pen to transcribe his message that he wished her to return instantly! The alarm which the letter excited prevented the consideration of these contradictory particulars. Miss Evans was in the chaise on her return to Caernarvonshire in half an hour after it arrived; nor was it till her anxiety

for her father was relieved by finding that the whole narrative was an infamous imposition, that she began to be surprized at her own want of penetration in not *immediately* discovering it to be so. A statement of this fact, which seemed to convey some fresh indications of Fitzosborne's guilt, was immediately dispatched to Monteith, and Henry Powerscourt undertook to be the courier. His generous heart braved every indignity and every danger; nor could even his Lucy's apprehensive terrors dissuade him from defying the resentment of a man whom she believed to be capable of adding murder to his other crimes. The preservation of his once-fondly loved, and still-tenderly esteemed Geraldine, overpowered all regard for his own personal safety. But his generous intentions were frustrated by the events which had happened at Monteith previous to his arrival.

CHAP. XXXIX.

O much deceiv'd, much failing, hapless Eve!
Of thy presum'd return! event perverse!
Thou never from that hour in Paradise
Foundst either sweet repast or sound repose;
Such ambush, laid among sweet flowers and shades,
Waited with hellish rancour imminent
To intercept thy way, or send thee back
Despoil'd of innocence, of faith, of bliss!

MILTON.

THE distress of Miss Evans for her father's supposed illness had given a temporary diversion to lady Monteith's ideas; but they soon recurred to the contemplation of her own sorrows. The affecting scene of the preceding evening, by reviving all her former tenderness, gave that importance to her friend's judgment of which it had been for some time deprived; and while she recollected

the impressive earnestness and indisputable sincerity with which it was delivered, she deemed it at least entitled to attention; and she determined to scrutinize the principles on which she had founded her opinion of Fitzosborne.

She first reverted to the high estimation in which his character was held by the world. Every one spoke of him as a most extraordinary man; and his inviolable integrity was confirmed by his behaviour on the discovery of lady Arabella's attachment to him. Nay, strange as it might seem, she often thought that he still cherished her idea in his heart. She knew that he had preserved her picture, and he had just rejected the proposal of an advantageous alliance with the rich heiress of an Islandic chieftain. This constancy, though from the discordance of their character scarcely attributable

tributable to the caprices of love, proved the solidity of his virtue, and secured herself from even a possibility of being the object of his licentious passion. His speculative notions on some points were indeed reprehensible; but then they were merely speculations; and she still thought Mr. Evans's notions, which tended to confine opinion, were deficient in liberality, and founded on a tyrannical desire of subjugating the free independent mind. All her own observations tended to convince her, that Henry and Lucy exaggerated his errors. No direct charge was brought against *him*, even supposing his companions to have been as profligate as they were described. A twelvemonth's intimacy was some ground whereon to judge of characters; and she could not help affirming, that the innocence of his conduct was a
proof

proof of the inoffensiveness of his principles.

The change in lord Monteith could not, even by Lucy's own confession, be *clearly* traced to his influence. The suspicion that he was accessory to his lordship's faults only arose from the probability of his having some secret seducer, and the influence which Fitzosborne seemed to have over him. For her own part she was doubtful of the existence of a seducer, and could not perceive any certain proof of that supposed influence.

His marked attentions to herself formed the next accusation. But Lucy knew nothing of the manners of the great world, or the freedoms which custom had rendered general. The universal homage, which even *appropriated* beauty required, and the familiar intercourse to which the censorious

3

did

did not affix the least shadow of impropriety, would shock her friend's notions, formed in the depth of retirement, and rather founded on the idea of what was prudent, than on the consideration of what is practicable.

Her thoughts then fell into a train of reflection upon the incidents of her early years, the peaceful shades of Powerscourt, the joyous hours of playful gaiety, the endearing recollection of tender confidence, and interesting simplicity, all rendered still more exquisite by the vivid glow of youthful hope, which spread a more fascinating splendor round the present scene, by the promise of more brilliant future enjoyments. Fallacious promise! falsified prediction! "Is there," said she, casting her eyes from the proud heights of Monteith castle on the subject vale;
" is

“ is there in all this wide domain a
“ wretch more miserable than me ? ”

She started at that recollection. “ Yes,
“ there are. *There* exists pining pe-
“ nury ; *there* destitute sickness suffers,
“ and wasting infancy declines ; not
“ only deprived of the assistance which
“ former experience prompted them to
“ expect from their lord, but even re-
“ fused what justice determines to be
“ their own. O Fitzosborne ! how
“ strongly do such situations demon-
“ strate the truth of your opinion, that
“ the present order of things requires
“ the bold hand of some intelligent re-
“ former ! ”

Leaving lady Monteith's conclusion to disprove itself, I proceed with my narrative. She walked to the cabinet which stood in her dressing-room, and, opening the casket which contained her mother's jewels, she determined to di-
vert

vert them from the service of ostentation and vanity to the nobler purposes of benevolence and integrity. She looked over, without a sigh, the various articles of ornament; but her mother's picture, set round with diamonds, excited a strong repugnance. It had been presented to one of her sisters, and restored to the Powercourt family, on the death of its owner. Lady Monteith attentively contemplated the features. "Thou art at rest," said she; "would I were so too. Thou didst endure severe bodily suffering; mine are the sharper tortures of the mind. The neglect of an estranged husband never rived thy heart!"

She then began a letter to a friend at Edinburgh, whom she wished to employ as an agent in this business. The difficulty of assigning a motive for this action, and the suspicious secrecy that she

she was forced to require, made her incapable of executing it to her satisfaction, though she made repeated attempts. "It will certainly be discovered," said she. "If it should come to my father's knowledge, it might displease, it must distress him. To whom but him should I apply for assistance? Ah! hard necessity! that I alone cannot solicit the bounty of his ever liberal hand!"

Tear after tear flowed down her cheek, when the sound of Fitzosborne's foot upon the stairs roused her from the stupor of grief. "He shall not see me in this disorder. Lucy shall not reproach me with having a *male* confidant." She hastily snatched up her papers, and retired to her own chamber. Her expedition was too much the effect of agitation to admit of exactness, and she left behind her a part of a letter which,

which, with her jewels lying upon the table, were sufficient to inform Fitzosborne of the nature of her recent occupation. He immediately inclosed bank-notes for four hundred pounds, which seemed to be the required sum, and addressed to lady Monteith a few respectful lines, in which he entreated her to permit him to enjoy a luxury seldom annexed to humble fortunes, by appropriating what was to him an incumbrance to those noble offices, to which he durst affirm she had destined the value of her jewels. He then sealed the note and retired.

Lady Monteith only waited to hear him quit the room to leave her retreat. She read the paper, which was addressed to her, and though she steadily determined to reject the inclosed present, she felt enraptured at the generosity which proffered the gift, and at the delicacy

delicacy which so insinuatingly sued for its acceptance. The reader will not partake in her feelings, when informed, that justice would have *ordered* the restitution of this property to the Monteth family, it being only a *part* of a larger sum which had been transmitted to Fitzosborne by a right honourable *rook* of his acquaintance, as a *douceur* for the favour of being permitted to have the principal plucking of the finest *pigeon* that had been for many years brought to market.

Ignorant of the nature of the “ac-
“ cursed spoil,” the countess remained steady in her resolution of returning it. In vain did Edward attempt to resist her determination. “ My pecuniary
“ difficulties,” said she, “ are not so dis-
“ tressing as to permit me to sequester
“ the slender portion of a younger bro-
“ ther.”

“ Re-

“Recollect,” replied Fitzosborne,
 “that the influence of lord Monteith
 “has permitted me to extend my hopes
 “beyond the narrow sphere of a younger
 “brother’s enjoyments, and do not
 “check the impulse of gratitude.”

“Then to lord Monteith be the recompence made.”

“And why not to his charming
 “wife? I should admire this lovely
 “pride, did I not suspect that it was
 “united to a degree of suspicion, unworthy of your purity and my own
 “honour. Can I no way convince you
 “of my sincere disinterested friendship? Can I make no offers which
 “will not be disdainfully refused?”

“Yes, certainly you may,” replied the countess; “and I will depute you,
 “instead of my Edinburgh friend, to
 “dispose of these jewels. Fashion varies so much, and people in the country

“ try dress so plain, that I scarcely ever
“ want such ornaments. Beside, lord
“ Monteith was remarkably liberal on
“ my marriage. They really are not of
“ the smallest use to me.”

“ I willingly undertake the commis-
“ sion,” returned Fitzosborne; “ but
“ it may be some time before I can
“ find a purchaser; and why should
“ this money lie useless in my secre-
“ tary? Are the objects of your boun-
“ ty (for I know it is not extravagance,
“ but generosity, which limits your
“ resources) to languish to an uncer-
“ tain period? Why may I not advance
“ it by way of loan? Indeed, lady
“ Monteith! you are too scrupu-
“ lous.”

“ I believe,” said she recollecting
herself, “ I am. I will accept your
“ offer. The jewels will, I am con-
“ fident,

“ fident, discharge the debt ; and pray
“ never expect me to redeem them.”

This business being adjusted, a momentary pause ensued. “ We exceedingly regret,” observed Fitzosborne, “ the loss of our cheerful companion Miss Evans. I hope she will find her father better.” The countess sincerely joined in that wish.

“ She was the life of our party,” continued Edward. “ My lord is quite miserable at her going. He declares that he never met with a woman whose manner so much entertained him ; all vivacity and spirit ; and certainly she was assiduously attentive and obliging to his lordship.”

“ She is generally obliging to every one,” replied the countess. “ But I think you sometimes experienced rather a severe bon mot.”

“ O, I

“ O, I don’t doubt that my impertinence deserved it ; and it was of no consequence to me, so she kept lord Monteith in good humour.”

Fitzosborne’s remarks were never without meaning ; and the most candid tempers, when roused to suspicion, are ever the most watchful. “ Does he,” thought the perplexed Geraldine, “ mean to insinuate that she was improperly attentive to my lord ? She is destitute of vanity, and infinitely superior to every sinister design. If she was more pointed in her civilities, it must have been from her conviction that I failed in paying him due observance ; and she strove to supply my deficiency. Alas ! even my bosom-friend condemns me. Even my Lucy will not allow how difficult it is for an injured heart to be at once affectionate and sincere, to disguise

“guise the bitter feeling which un-
 “kindness calls forth, under a forced
 “smile that has lost the power of plea-
 “sing.”

This inference was exactly what Edward wished her to draw. He had for some time attempted to revive the flame of jealousy in lady Monteith's bosom; but it was not in the chaste simplicity of Miss Evans's manner that he hoped to find materials to feed the fire. It was sufficient for him, that Geraldine should think her friend censorious and partial; another object had long since been fixed upon to effect the consummation of Fitzosborne's treacherous devices.

Among lord Monteith's tenants was a young woman, the daughter of a farmer, highly graced by the charms of natural beauty, and not less distinguished by a levity of manner, and a

fashionable arrangement of dress, extremely dissimilar to the plain attire and sober demeanour of the neighbours in her rank of life. These circumstances, though perhaps only the result of folly and inconsideration, or at the worst unsuspicious vanity, the uncommon beauty of the girl forced into attention; and even at the castle, when better subjects were exhausted, the person, the finery, and the flirtations of Pattie Thompson formed an occasional theme for conversation. Geraldine had been frequently diverted by her awkward, yet not disgusting imitation of her own dress and manners; and on Fitzosborne's first arrival at Monteith, she pointed her out as a figure very likely to attract general attention if seen in Grosvenor-square or Hyde-park. Edward gazed a few moments, gave an exclamation of surprize, and then

then whispered her, that she was the exact likeness of Mrs. Harley.

From that moment the countess turned her eyes from the blooming Pattie with an involuntary shudder of horror; and when she invited the rural lasses to a dance in the castle in honour of one of her daughter's birth-days, she was secretly pleased that Farmer Thompson's daughter could not be of the party. Even her visits at the old man's house were less frequent than those which she made to her other neighbours. She felt herself wrong, and she determined to make a painful effort to be right. She set out accordingly, and had nearly reached the dwelling, when she saw lord Monteith walking hastily towards it by another road. The discovery was of itself sufficiently agitating, but Fitzosborne, as usual, pointed the dart more directly to her peace of

mind by the sudden exclamation of " Good Heaven ! " He left her instantly, flew to the earl, and, seizing him by the arm, with a degree of violent gesticulation, walked back with him to the castle.

The visit of the countess was short, and her manner was ungracious. She returned home, and, pleading that the walk had overcome her, she continued confined to her chamber the remainder of the day. However poignant her feelings, she never disclosed them even to her Lucy, who was then at Monteith. But she had continued to brood over this really accidental circumstance in secret till the time of which I am now treating. If it should here be objected to my narrative, that chance had too considerable a share in the success of Fitzosborne to give probability to the similar designs of another villain, let
inex-

inexperience and self-confidence remember, that a determined seducer, admitted to an equal degree of intimacy, will always find in the domestic events of every family equal opportunities of expediting his views. The most subtle genius cannot preconcert every operation. It is in the directing skill by which incidental circumstances are made to conduce to one great design, that the power of superior ability is most eminently visible.

Fitzosborne, now conceiving the mine to be fully delved, determined on the immediate explosion. He was conscious that a discovery was impending; and when he considered the magnitude and the intricacy of his plots, he felt astonished at his own good fortune in having so long escaped detection. To trifle with danger was now folly.

My readers have doubtless ascribed to him the letter which hurried Miss Evans to Caernarvonshire, as they will easily conceive that her presence was an insuperable obstacle to the completion of his iniquity. I must now inform them, that by repeated bribes he had seduced the fidelity of lord Monteith's butler, and the groom who generally accompanied him on horseback. They regularly gave him information of every event that happened in the family. His appearance in the library, and the opening of the banqueting-room door on the night lady Monteith went down stairs to speak to the steward, were not accidental. The watchfulness of Miss Evans checked the audacious hopes which he had that evening dared to form from the extreme distress which resentment had kindled in lady Monteith's mind against
the

the degrading conduct of her lord. But Miss Evans was now far distant; the faithful conscientious steward had set out for Edinburgh to transact some money affairs; and lord Monteith was wholly engrossed by the shooting season, which had just commenced.

The third morning after Miss Evans's departure, my lord was absent at breakfast; but that was not uncommon. Fitzosborne read some of Wieland's works to the countess, commented on the beautiful descriptions, and then proposed a walk. They went through the plantations to the lake. On the road she enlarged, with affecting simplicity, on the pleasure which she once enjoyed in adding a finishing grace to the richness of that striking scenery; and a tear stole down her cheek, as she pointed out parts which her lord had *used* to commend. Fitzosborne's replies

were calculated to confirm her apprehension that she must now turn her mind to different objects; for that the pleasures of connubial esteem and confidence were lost for ever. On their way home they passed near Farmer Thompson's, Fitzosborne proposed calling, but the countess, pleading weariness, declined going out of her way, and rested upon a stile, while Edward went, as he said, to please himself with the sight of a pretty girl. He returned thoughtful and disconcerted, and observed gravely that she was not at home.

Dinner was served soon after their return, but no one could find lord Monteith. "This is very extraordinary," said the countess. "He used to be remarkably punctual. Who went with him?"

"My

"My lord took no servant," was the butler's reply.

Geraldine felt alarmed: "Sure no accident has happened. Call my lord's groom." He was questioned respecting the safety of his horse, and the countess was now informed that he was not gone out upon any of his own horses.

"Search the woods immediately. Some dreadful event must have detained him. He never would go far from home on foot, and unattended. Had he a gun with him." The groom now owned in some confusion, that his master had set off early that morning in a hired chaise and four.

"Do none of you know which road he took?" The servants were divided in their opinions. The greater part said, he went towards the moors, but the butler and the groom declared that

they saw the chaise turn round by the lodges in the park, as if it was going to Farmer Thompson's, and then, after having stopped for a moment, proceeded towards Edinburgh.

Geraldine now trembled with undefined distress. "Did you," said she to Fitzosborne, "know nothing of this journey?"

He ordered the servants to retire, and then said, "He confides none of *these* secrets to me. I only know that his affairs are desperate; but before I mention my further suspicions, allow me to ascertain their validity. I will just run to Farmer Thompson's. For heaven's sake! be composed. I will soon be back. Shall I send your children to you."

"No! no! fly! fly!" was all she could articulate.

He

He soon returned, and the tale he told corroborated in every particular the butler's account. Pattie Thompson was seen in a chaise with a gentleman, wrapped in a riding-coat, at six o'clock that morning. The countess fainted.

The tyger who sports with the victim that he holds in his fangs is not suspected to feel compassion; nor did the tender epithets which Fitzosborne addressed to the object of his more savage cruelty indicate a relenting heart. He wished, indeed, to recal her senses; but it was only that she might feel the torments of guilt added to those of misery.

No sooner did he perceive returning life faintly flush upon her cheek, and her scarcely-opened eyes fixed upon him with a look at once expressive of confidence and despair, than he deter-

mined to confirm that despair and to abuse that confidence.

“Where shall I go? What shall I do?” inquired the distressed Geraldine.

“I know not what to advise. You cannot stay at Monteith. The creditors will certainly hear of the earl’s departure.——”

“Cannot stay!—why?”

“An execution will be immediately served.”

“O my helpless, houseless babes!—where shall I shelter *them*?”

“Surely your properest asylum will be with your father.”

“True. O! let me fly to Powerscourt.”

“Yet consider his years and infirmities. Will there not be some danger in pouring upon him, while unprepared, the whole weight of your calamities; of afflicting him
“with

“ with your distress before you have
“ learnt fortitude to endure it. Can-
“ not you be for a little time at the
“ Evans’s.

“ My Lucy is already sinking with
“ her own sorrow. Ought I to increase
“ it?”

“ Permit me then, ever loved and
“ respected lady Monteith, to propose
“ another asylum. I have a sister, a
“ woman of the most unblemished cha-
“ racter, who will esteem it an honour
“ to protect you. Allow me to con-
“ duct you and your children to her.
“ She lives in Lancashire.”

“ No! Fitzosborne. I must not take
“ refuge with *your* friends.”

“ I can name no other sanctuary,
“ unless it be lady Arabella Macdo-
“ nald’s house. And surely calumny
“ itself must approve of your taking
“ refuge there.”

“ I can-

“I cannot apply for protection to
“lady Arabella. She will be severe,
“and make me feel the pang of de-
“pendance.”

“You are then unacquainted with
“the influence which I have happily
“regained over her sentiments. But I
“recollect, that, engrossed by your
“sorrows, I have omitted to announce
“my own brightening prospects.”

He then drew from his pocket a
letter which strongly resembled the
writing, and still more the style, of
lady Arabella. It was addressed to the
Honourable Edward Fitzosborne.

“S I R,

“I really do feel so excessively dis-
“concerted, that I hardly know in
“what style to begin. For one hates
“to own oneself wrong, and yet I
“think I ought to tell you that I have
“been

“ been under some little mistake : and
“ not chusing to be upon bad terms
“ with a gentleman so vastly well spoken
“ of, and received, every where, I
“ just add, that I shall be very glad to
“ see you at my parties when you
“ come to London. I hope this con-
“ cession will satisfy lord Monteith, to
“ whom and his sweet Geraldine I beg
“ my tender regards, and remain, sir,
“ with sincere esteem,

“ Your very obedient servant,

“ ARABELLA MACDONALD.”

“ Shall I then throw myself at her
“ feet? and ask her to protect me and
“ my children ; to save us from want ;
“ to soften the pangs of perfidy at least,
“ till I can gently prepare my father ?”
inquired the afflicted Geraldine.

“ I would advise, that you should
“ not only do so, but that you should
“ set

“ set off immediately. A thought has
“ just struck me. You may overtake
“ lord Monteith. He has certainly
“ taken the road to London.”

“ What ? with that unfortunate girl ?
“ O, Fitzosborne ! a wife is bound by
“ indissoluble ties, and must suffer
“ with him ; but how could he be so
“ cruel, so selfish, to involve a stranger
“ in his calamities. She was innocent,
“ happy, blessed with humble compe-
“ tence.”

“ Your candour has misled you. I
“ have certain proof that a criminal
“ connection has subsisted some time
“ between them. She probably pro-
“ poses to accompany lord Monteith
“ abroad.”

“ Abroad ! Is he going abroad ? What
“ absolutely desert me and my little
“ ones without one preparatory word ?
“ Leave me too in all these compli-
“ cated

“ cated circumstances of grief and distress? Oh! hold my brain, or let me lose reflection in instant madness.

“ Unparalleled! unpardonable cruelty!”

“ It is indeed unpardonable. Monteith, the execrable Monteith, is unworthy of you.”

“ May the anguish which I suffer, Fitzosborne, warn you of the danger of a precipitate choice! Let not your eye mislead your judgment, nor your fancy cheat you with the semblance of non-existing virtues.”

“ My heart, most charming moralist, is for ever fixed where my judgment has discovered the most unquestionable excellence. Yet do not droop beneath your sorrow. The tyrant laws of custom will not for ever bind you to the mean despicable seducer of a simple rustic, the depraved associate of a hireling prostitute.”

“ True:

“ True. But my children. O!
“ for their sakes what would I not
“ submit to? I would still endure his
“ contempt. I would kneel, and hum-
“ bly supplicate to be the partner in
“ all *their* father’s fortunes.”

Fitzosborne paused. “ No inju-
“ ries, I see, can compel her to a willing
“ elopement. It is well; I have a re-
“ source. I know that I possess her
“ affections; and women always pardon
“ where they love.”

“ If such be your resolution,” said
he to the half-frantic Geraldine, “ let
“ me instantly order your carriage, that
“ you may set off in pursuit of him.
“ Every moment’s delay increases the
“ difficulty of overtaking him.”
“ True. I will be gone. You are my
“ better angel, Fitzosborne. Order my
“ carriage, while I fetch my little ones.
“ They shall kneel with me to their
“ faithless father.”

“ Dear-

“ Dearest lady Monteith,” returned Fitzosborne, infernal triumph sparkling in his eyes, “ how distress affects your
“ strong intellects ! At this late hour,
“ their season of rest, would you expose their delicate frames to the danger of a rapid pursuit ? Consider, that
“ all your hopes of overtaking lord Monteith depend upon your speed. If
“ you are successful, your own charms,
“ and your deep distress, must possess sufficient eloquence ; and if you are so
“ unfortunate as to miss him, will it
“ be acting with proper decorum to
“ lady Arabella to obtrude your family
“ upon her without previous preparation ? ”

“ Am I then to leave them here,
“ the sport of merciless creditors ? ”

“ Rest assured, madam, that, however barbarous our laws may be, in
“ that

“ that particular, the execution of them
“ is happily conducted with urbanity,
“ at least to people of your rank. But,
“ to soften my apprehension on their
“ account, I will take care to escort
“ them wherever you please to order,
“ when you are placed in honourable
“ protection. Their nurses are very
“ careful of them; they are too young
“ to know sorrow by anticipation;
“ and any tale will account for your
“ absence.”

“ Is the carriage ready? where is
“ Maria?”

“ She and my servant are packing
“ up a few necessary changes of linen.
“ They can follow us in another chaise.”

“ *Us*, Fitzosborne? You do not
“ mean to go with me?”

“ On that head I must be firm. Hu-
“ manity will not suffer me to let you
“ undertake such a journey by yourself
“ in

“ in circumstances of such peculiar
“ distress. Beside, if you should over-
“ take Monteith upon the road, who
“ knows but that his violence, aggra-
“ vated by detected guilt, may make
“ you want a protector.”

“ What bloody scenes are you re-
“ volving? Lost, unhappy Geraldine!
“ Better perish here than want a pro-
“ tector against thy husband.”

“ He has abjured the feelings annex-
“ ed to that title. Though I renounce
“ the name of his friend, and cancel
“ all ties of gratitude, yet for your
“ sake you shall see me calm and dis-
“ passionate, nay even patient of insult.
“ But you forget how we waste these
“ precious moments.”

“ Ah, true.” She stepped towards the
door; and then, suddenly stopping,
exclaimed, “ Where are my children?
“ I must see them once more?”

“ Would

“ Would you wake them from their
“ sleep?” cried Fitzosborne, who dreaded the event of such an interview.
“ Would you fill their innocent minds
“ with sorrow at seeing your distress?”

“ Sleep on, my innocent, peaceful
“ children; and never may ye know
“ what your mother suffers!” She then turned her eyes upon Fitzosborne. The expression in his countenance excited a momentary alarm. She withdrew her hand from his impassioned grasp, and fearfully uttered: “ Something still
“ whispers me, that I ought not to go:
“ at least, not with you.”

“ Whence this cruel distrust of your
“ adopted brother, the contracted husband of your Arabella?” returned the recollected dissembler. “ Dear
“ lady Monteith! Will these starts of
“ too susceptible delicacy never cease,
“ even if you should see that engagement fulfilled?”

“ Then

“ Then remember,” replied she, in an impressive voice, “ that my distraction enfeeble my judgment. My brain seems on fire. If the step you advise should widen the breach between me and my lord, on you be all the blame.”

“ May it rest upon me for ever !” He uttered this terrible imprecation as he led his victim to the chariot. He stopped a moment, under pretence of giving his valet instructions for their route, while Geraldine, clasping her trembling hands exclaimed, “ Adieu, Monteith ! perhaps eternally adieu !” The servants crowded into the corridor with looks of consternation and distress. Fitzosborne called aloud, that the other carriage should follow as soon as possible, and join them at the next post-town. Then throwing himself into the chariot, the horses set off full speed on the Edinburgh road.

CHAP. XL.

Axylus, hospitable, rich, and good,
 In fair Arisba's walls (his native place)
 He held his seat; the friend of human race,
 Fast by the road, his ever-open door
 Oblig'd the wealthy, and reliev'd the poor.
 Breathless the good man fell.

POPE'S HOMER.

MARIA stood in the great hall ready to attend her lady, her eyes swelled with tears, and her heart throbbing with sorrow at the idea of her beloved mistress's distress, when she was joined by the old housekeeper.

"Pray, Mrs. Maria," said the good woman, "can you tell me what is the matter with her ladyship? It is so odd to set out for London at eight o'clock at night, and so late in September too. Thank God! there is

“ a very good moon to be sure, and
 “ the roads are very safe, and I wish
 “ you all well there with all my heart.
 “ But the poor soul must be faint, for
 “ she has not ate one mouthful of din-
 “ ner, though I sent up two courses as
 “ nicely dished as ever I did in my life.
 “ She has had nothing within her lips,
 “ the footmen say, but one glass of
 “ some sort of cordial which Mr. Fitz-
 “ osborne mixed up and gave her.”

“ My master did not touch one
 “ morsel neither,” observed Fitzos-
 borne’s servant, who now joined them.

“ Your master, Mr. Pomade, does
 “ not do many things which other
 “ people think they ought to do. He
 “ never goes to church, nor says his
 “ prayers ; and yet he pretends to be
 “ very good. So, if he can be good
 “ without going to church, or saying

“ his prayers, he may live without eat-
“ ing for what I know.”

“ You are rather severe, Mrs. Anni-
“ seed. My master, madam, I must
“ inform you, is one of the most ge-
“ nerous, free, good-tempered gentle-
“ men in the world.”

“ Very likely ; I only know that my
“ lord and lady were as happy as kings
“ and queens before he came.”

“ I wish,” said the weeping Maria,
“ that our chaise was ready.”

“ Go, Sandy,” said Pomade to one
of the grooms, “ do just have the
“ goodness for once to be expeditious ;
“ and if you will do me the honour
“ of a call in town, a bottle of bur-
“ gundy is at your service : but, à-
“ propos, my dear Miss Maria, suppose
“ I have the happiness of just drinking
“ one glass of wine with you before we
“ set

“ set out on our *immense* long expedition.”

The housekeeper now beckoned Maria into the spice-room. “ Do as you please, child,” said the sagacious matron; “ but if I was you, I would not go to London with that random fop. You and I will get into the chaise, and say nothing to him, but go by ourselves after our dear mistress.”

“ But he has received directions what inns we are to stop at on the road.”

“ Never mind. With God’s blessing, we shall find her as well without him as with him, I dare say. Ah Maria! Maria! there is no good abroad, I fear. Heaven preserve her ladyship is all I say.”

One of the stable-boys now entered to say, that, as my lord’s groom was

putting the horses into the travelling postchaise, one of them had turned restive, and had kicked the shafts all to pieces.

"Then harness out my lord's," exclaimed Maria.

"That's impossible; for the coachman is gone with it to Stirling to be mended."

"Then I will have the coach."

"What? send the new coach twelve miles in the night? No! Master Sandy dare not do that, I know. Why, the coachman would have us both turned off directly."

"Then pray, William, let me have the currie."

"No," said the housekeeper; "I won't have my bones broke in the currie; but I can ride double very well. Have the two saddle horses got ready directly."

A shout

A shout of ridicule was now raised against the housekeeper by Mr. Pomade, who came to condole with Maria upon his misfortune in not having the pleasure of travelling with her that evening.

"We must defer our expedition, my dear," said he, "till morning's early ray; and I protest, but for the loss of your charming company, I should be glad; for I find the thick mountain fog very pernicious to my lungs, which suffered extremely in crossing the Alps when I came out of Italy. Mr. Fitzosborne has too much friendship for me to be displeased at my not exposing myself to the night air."

"I will follow my lady," said Maria, "if I go on foot."

"You will be very likely to be sure to overtake her, who has set out an hour before you in a chariot and

“ four. No! come, as it is utterly
“ impossible for us to proceed, let us
“ embrace my good friend the butler’s
“ proposal, and have a little festival.
“ He has promised us plenty of excel-
“ lent champagne; and I request Miss
“ Maria’s hand for the ball. Nay!
“ my dear creature, why do you cry
“ so? Lady Monteith will be vastly well
“ taken care of, I dare say. ‘Pon my
“ soul! I shall begin to be scandalous,
“ if you take on so, and say, that though
“ her ladyship looks like an angel, she
“ is a devil of a termagant.”

“ I don’t know what your master
“ looks like; but I could tell you what
“ he is, if I chose it,” said the house-
keeper: “ but it is not my way to
“ be uncivil to any body.” Her mo-
deration, however, continued no longer
than till she heard that the riding-horses
were all loose in the Park, and that the
groom

groom had fatigued himself to no purpose in endeavouring to catch them. She now poured upon Fitzosborne a thousand execrations; and, without paying the least attention to the excuses, which strove to persuade her that these misfortunes were merely the effect of chance, her passion and Maria's tears became so troublesome, that the butler, to pacify them, promised to walk to the next post-town, and to order a hired chaise immediately.

He did walk, but it was only to the watch-tower, where he, Mr. Pomade, and the perfidious groom, spent a riotous evening, exulting in the triumph of wickedness, and anticipating their promised reward, while the rest of the family exhibited a scene of distraction.

The morning rose, but not to bring consolation. The obstacles to Maria's following her lady multiplied every hour.

hour. Indeed, that faithful girl was now incapable of taking the journey. She had been in strong hysterics most part of the night; and the venerable housekeeper, though she alternately blamed, pitied, and commended her affectionate fellow-servant, had now so exhausted her own feeble strength, that she was unequal to any further exertion.

About two o'clock a carriage drove into the castle-yard, and was welcomed by the universal shout of, "Thank God! it is either my lord or my lady." It was neither. Henry Powerscourt arrived, but unhappily one day too late to save the honour, and ultimately the life of Geraldine.

"Where is lady Monteith?" was his first inquiry. "Gone."—"Whither?" No one knew.—"With whom?"—"Mr. Fitzosborne."

Henry

Henry reeled against the portal, clapped his hand to his forehead, and was speechless.

The servants crowded round him. A burst of tears relieved his manly sorrow. He then inquired, "Where is my lord?"—"Gone too."—"What, in pursuit of the countess?"—No! they believed her ladyship was gone after him.

"This is villany of a deeper cast," resumed Henry. "She is the victim of fraud, not of persuasion."

The housekeeper was by this time got into the hall, eager to ask his opinion, or to receive his instructions. And the pale trembling Maria, hearing that Mr. Powercourt knew what was become of her lady, had dragged her feeble frame to hear the desired tidings.

"Heaven bless you! my good sir," said the housekeeper. "If you had

“but come a little sooner, it would not have been so.” Henry now inquired the particulars, which were recounted as intelligibly as twenty different voices could detail them. In one point they all agreed, that their lady seemed in the greatest distress.

“Ah, betrayed innocent!” exclaimed Henry. “And is my lord’s journey a secret too?”

“A most profound one, sir,” said the butler.

“He went, you say, in a hired chaise and four, at six o’clock yesterday morning, the road toward the Moors?”

“I do, sir,” replied the groom.

“Nay now, Sandy,” said one of the footmen, “that is little better than a lie; I said so, and you told my lady, when she seemed so frightened about him, that you saw the chaise

“ turn by the lodges in the park,
“ and then stop, and go back again
“ toward Edinburgh.”

“ Did not you think so too, Mr.
“ Thomas ?” said the groom, address-
ing the butler.”

“ Why, my eyes might deceive me,
“ but Mr. Pomade thought the same.”

“ Who is Mr. Pomade ?”

“ Mr. Fitzosborne’s servant.”

“ Call him. He may possibly throw
“ some light on this inexplicable busi-
“ ness.”

“ He went off to London at four
“ o’clock this morning,” answered the
groom.

“ How ?”—“ On horseback.”

“ Another lie,” exclaimed the house-
keeper. “ O, there are some wicked
“ doings, and it will all come out.
“ The very stones in the street will
“ speak when there has been a murder.

“ His master has got no horses, and
“ you told us that you could not catch
“ any of my lord’s, if we would give
“ you a thousand pounds.”

“ Do I,” said Powerscourt, “ see
“ around me so many stout healthy
“ men, fed by lord Monteith’s bounty;
“ and would none of them walk
“ to ——— to order a chaise, that this
“ young woman might have accompa-
“ nied her mistress?”

A general murmur announced that they would all have willingly walked to Johnny Groat’s house to serve their lord or their lady, but the butler had undertaken that office.

“ And why did he not perform it
“ then?” said Powerscourt. “ I stopped
“ at that town myself two hours ago,
“ and I am confident, not only that
“ there are chaises to be procured,
“ but

“ but also that no messenger from
“ Monteith had been to order one.”

The butler attempted an excuse; but the groom, falling upon his knees, said, he would confess all. Mr. Fitzosborne had long designed to run away with his lady when he had an opportunity. His lordship received a note on the evening before her departure, after his lady was gone to bed, giving him an invitation to go to shoot some moor-game on the neighbouring mountains with some gentlemen of his acquaintance; and, proposing to set off soon in the morning, he left a note for his lady, telling her where he was gone. He confessed too, that he had told Mr. Fitzosborne this, and also that he was gone in a hired chaise on account of the bad roads, and without any attendants, for gentlemen did not like to have any more with them on the mountains

tains than were absolutely necessary. That Fitzosborne then took the note from him, and bade him say, if he was questioned, that he went round by Farmer Thompson's, and then turned toward Edinburgh.

Influenced by a sudden start of indignation, Henry ordered both the groom and the butler into custody; without considering that the blackest crimes will sometimes evade the punishment of *human* laws. He now paused a moment to consider how he should act, when the head nurse thus interrupted his musings:

“ Won't you see the pretty little dears,
“ fir? Alas-a-day! what is to become
“ of them? They have been asking for
“ their mamma all the morning. Lady
“ Bell and lady Lucy have sat and
“ learned the lessons she gave them
“ yesterday, like two angels; and they
“ say

“ say that they know she will call them
“ good girls, and kiss them, when she
“ comes : and that dear beautiful little
“ creature Geraldine has made up a
“ nosegay for mam-mam. She can
“ hardly talk, you know. Dear sweet
“ souls ! to have their mother taken
“ from them. So young too ! Do,
“ good sir, just go and see them. My
“ little lord is vastly grown, even since
“ you went away, and crows, and is
“ so merry !”

Henry suffered himself to be led to the nursery. The scene overpowered his fortitude. “ O, cousin Harry !” echoed the two elder, “ we are so glad
“ you are come again.”—“ Do,” continued Arabella, “ tell mamma we
“ are ready with our books. Is not
“ she well, that she has not been to see
“ us this morning ? nurse does cry so,
“ and she won’t tell us why.”

“ Were

“Were all thy drops of blood lives,
“Fitzosborne!” exclaimed Henry,
“thy crimes demand the forfeiture of
“all. Villain! monstrous infernal vil-
“lain! to sacrifice to sensual passion
“the peace, the welfare, the reputa-
“tion of innocents like these!”

“My dear little ladies,” cried the
nurse to the terrified children, “naughty
“Mr. Fitzosborne has took your mam-
“ma away; but if you will be very
“good, and not cry, this good gen-
“tleman will fetch her back again.”

“Yes, indeed, I will be very good,”
said the sobbing lady Arabelia, “and
“not cry, if I can help it. Pray, Lucy,
“don’t hold cousin Harry’s coat; con-
“sider you will hinder him; and when
“you find mamma, cousin, tell her
“she shall not see us cry when she
“comes home again.”

Henry

Henry caught the children alternately in his arms, and while his heart yearned at their misfortune, he commended their deserted innocence to the common Parent of the orphan and the distressed. He at length tore himself from the affecting scene.

He now debated which way to shape his course: whether to set off in pursuit of the countess, or to communicate the intelligence of her absence to lord Monteith, and to consult with him what measures should be adopted. Every circumstance proved that she had been rather entrapped than seduced. A hope struck him, that his rescue might come in time to save her from dishonour, and he set out rapidly in search of her.

He stopped at all the post inns on the route to Edinburgh; but his minute inquiries obtained no satisfaction.

In

In that city he renewed his scrutiny ; and when his failing hopes had almost deserted him, he obtained what he thought a guiding clue. It proved evasive. Still, however, convinced in his own mind, that London would be the place of Fitzosborne's destination, as being best suited for the purposes of concealment, he continued to travel towards the south, till he accidentally saw a tenant of sir William Powercourt's at an inn door, where he was changing horses. Anxiety for his Lucy induced him to inquire after her welfare. The honest rustic mournfully shook his head. " Ah ! sir," said he, " all is well at the parsonage ; but very " bad news at the manor-house. Our " good old master has heard that the " lady countess his daughter ran away " with a fine London 'squire ; and it " has thrown the gout into his sto-
mach.

“ mach, and they doubt he won’t get
“ over it. There’s not a dry eye
“ within ten miles of him by this time.
“ I told all the folks I met as I came
“ along, and they all began to pray
“ for him, and to drink to his getting
“ well. And they do so curse my
“ lady countess. For my part, sir, I
“ can’t curse her ; for I don’t think it
“ true ; do you ? She was the prettiest,
“ decentest young lady I ever saw in
“ my life, when she was with us ; but
“ they do say this London squire was
“ an eternal great rogue.”

Henry lifted up his eyes to heaven,
as if requiring the tardy lightning to
blast Fitzosborne’s complicated guilt.
He now turned his course westward,
and arrived at Powerscourt late the en-
suing day, worn down by fatigue and
anxiety. He had, however, the satis-
faction to hear, that sir William was
still

still alive, and he learnt the following particulars from Mr. Evans.

The news of lady Monteith's elopement had travelled to Powerscourt with inconceivable celerity. A dependant of the earl's, more grateful than judicious in his intentions, had persuaded himself, that a mighty noise was made about nothing at all; for that the lady was only gone to stay a little with her father, as his wife would sometimes do, when he had a word or two with her. He determined therefore to ride post to Caernarvonshire, not doubting that he should bring news back of her being safe and well. His uncouth manner, and confused extravagant account rather amused than alarmed the servants, and it was accidentally communicated to sir William. Nothing respecting his darling child was uninteresting to him. He ordered the "bonnie Scot" into
his

his presence; and though he gave little credence to the improbable narrative, he heard with concern, that lord Monteith's affairs were in a bad state, and that he and his lady were thought not to be quite so happy as they were.

Sir William passed a restless miserable night, and the next morning appeared seriously ill. He rose, however, with the determination of going himself into Scotland, when an express arrived from lord Monteith, which proclaimed his own disgrace in terms of the most rash severity; and hastened the crisis of sir William's disorder. He was immediately seized with spasms in his stomach, and, though somewhat relieved by medical aid, he still remained speechless, and in a very alarming state.

"He is perfectly sensible," continued Mr. Evans, "and his countenance is inconceivably interesting. I
" never

“ never saw so much meek sorrow
“ silently expressed. I am confident,
“ that his frame of mind is such as his
“ life would warrant us to expect, and
“ that he blesses the Power that cor-
“ rects him. I have just been at prayers
“ by his bed-side. He pressed my
“ hand when I had finished; looked at
“ the portrait of his daughter, which
“ hung at his bed’s feet, then on me;
“ and lastly raised his eyes to Heaven.
“ I understood that he commended her
“ to me. The ligature, as Sterne ob-
“ serves, fine as it is, shall never be
“ broken. When the world forsakes
“ her, I will receive and cherish the
“ mourner. She may be frail and cri-
“ minal; she cannot be wholly aban-
“ doned.”

Lucy now, having heard of Henry’s
return, rushed into the room with in-
quiries respecting her friend. She
listened

listened with breathless eagerness to the narrative which he related. "'Tis as I said," exclaimed she, clasping her hands: "I knew that her pure elevated mind could never yield consent to an adulterous elopement. O Henry! do follow her to London—the traitor has certainly concealed her there;—rescue her from him;—fear not his opposition—guilt like his must be cowardly:—perhaps even yet you may save our Geraldine."

"Let us study moderation in every thing," replied Mr. Evans in his usual dignified manner; "whether we grieve for ther respectable friend who seems leaving us for a happier world, or seek to assist the dear lady who appeared to be worthy of a better fate. Let us ever remember, that excess offends. Do not you see, my dear child, that Mr. Powerscourt is ex-
" hausted

“hausted by distress, and the fatigue
“of seven days’ incessant travelling.
“We have no clue to direct us where
“to find the lost countess. Instead,
“therefore, of wearing out his strength
“in impatient romantic wandering, let
“him reserve it, till some certain in-
“telligence calls us forth to action;
“and if *I* can serve the child of my be-
“nefactor, neither my age nor my
“function shall be pleaded in my ex-
“cuse. In the mean time we will con-
“sole ourselves with the conviction,
“that Fitzosborne cannot secrete her
“from the superintendence of Omni-
“potence; and we will confide her to
“the care of that Providence which
“never deserts those who, sensible of
“their own weakness and the perils by
“which they are surrounded, sanctify
“the measures which human prudence
“suggests by a dependence upon him
“who

“ who is able to save.” The weeping Lucy acquiesced in the piety and the wisdom of this reflection.

Affairs continued in this state at Powerscourt till the following evening. Sir William grew perceptibly weaker, and Henry in vain endeavoured to inspire Miss Evans with the hopes which he had himself abandoned. Every sound and every footstep seemed to her charged with tidings from her friend. About nine in the evening a note arrived, which I shall transcribe :

“ TO MISS EVANS.

“ Let not Miss Evans start at the
“ writing of her once-beloved Geraldine. The lost miserable wretch presumes not to claim the friendship which
“ was the delight of her happier days.
“ I only ask compassion. Tell me, is my
“ father yet alive? If he is, exert that

“ resistless eloquence which convinces
“ every heart, and move him to bestow
“ his parental blessing on his undone
“ child. And for this act of mercy,
“ the last I will ever solicit, my dying
“ lips—but I dare not pray—I did
“ not ask the protecting care of Hea-
“ ven.—I did not listen to your coun-
“ sels.—I was self-willed, boastful.—
“ Ah! what am I now?—I have no
“ home, no name, no one to recog-
“ nize or to protect me. Lord Mon-
“ teith—but I deserve his accusations.
“ Yet if I am the shameless being he
“ calls me—I know not what I say.—
“ O that eternal mercy would save me
“ from the pangs of murdering my
“ father!”

I spare all comment upon the feelings of Miss Evans at receiving this incoherent epistle. Indeed it would be impossible to say, whether grief or joy, rage

rage or pity predominated. The messenger stated, that the lady who sent him was at an inn a few miles distant. The landlady told him it was a great pity that none of her friends came to her, for that she was quite alone, very ill, and scarcely in her right mind.

Not an instant was lost in expediting the desired consolation. The carriage was prepared, and the servants mounted, each contending, with all their national impetuosity and humanity, who should be the first to fetch back the respected fugitive. Lucy had determined to go, but Henry persuaded her to change that resolution. "Spend the time of my
"absence," said he, "with your father,
"and consult his dispassionate judg-
"ment, whether it will be prudent to
"apprize sir William that we have
"heard of her. Try too, my love, to
"prepare your fortitude for the most

“ excruciating trial it ever sustained.
“ The dear unfortunate requires more
“ than the tear of sympathizing for-
“ row.”

“ Restore her quickly to me,” cried Miss Evans. “ I will watch her night
“ and day. She shall be all my em-
“ ployment, all my care.”

“ The speed of my return will en-
“ tirely depend upon her ability to
“ bear the journey,” replied Henry.

Let the susceptible reader, who has attended to the delineation of lady Monteth's character through the preceding pages, conceive the situation of her mind at the time that her cousin joined her at the obscure inn which afforded her a temporary asylum. Let them recollect her keen abhorrence of disgrace, her eager pursuit of fame, her acute sensibility as a daughter, a wife, and a mother. Let them contrast the exquisite

sive refinement of her ideas with her present calamities, and release me from the vain attempt of describing her mental sufferings.

She lay upon a couch; her eyes fixed and rayless; her listless arms hanging motionless; her face deadly pale, and half concealed by her redundant neglected hair. The attendant, who was sitting by her, announced a gentleman who wished to speak with her. Instantly the stupefaction in her countenance changed to extreme terror. She grasped the girl's hand, and entreated her to save her, while her eyes rolled with frightful wildness. The terrified maid added, that his name was Powercourt; but that he should not come in unless she pleased. The countess relaxed her convulsive grasp, and sunk fainting upon the couch.

Henry, who at that moment entered, contemplated, in mournful anguish, the change so suddenly wrought in the loveliest of female forms. While the remembrance of his youthful attachment gave a livelier impulse to his susceptibility, he rejoiced in the firm integrity which had preserved him from the insinuating enticements of an illicit passion, and clasping his hands in an ecstasy of piety, gratitude, and regret, he exclaimed, "Thank God! I have not this
" to answer."

Geraldine misinterpreted his emotion. "I am a murderer then?—A
" paricide? He is dead."

"No! he is still alive," said Henry,
" in a faltering tone.

"And has he," exclaimed she with impassioned frenzy, "sent me any token
" of forgiveness?"

"I am

"I am come," continued Henry, wetting with his tears the feverish hand which she held towards him, "to conduct you home."

"Blessed, angelic, peaceful sound!—
"My home!—I never thought to
"have a home again.—O raise me up.
"Let us go this instant."

"Are you equal to the journey?"

"Yes. I can go home. O Heavenly sound!—My father's house!
"And have I indeed yet a father?"

Unable to judge of her real strength during this paroxysm of joy, Mr. Powercourt proposed waiting till the horses were refreshed. The uniform humanity of Geraldine shone through her disorder. "My heart is surely grown hard
"with my misfortunes. Are they my
"father's *old* horses that used to take
"me out when I was a girl? I talk
"foolishly, Henry. I did not know it

“ was you.—I thought you was lord
“ Monteith come back again—or I
“ thought you—I know not whom—
“ I was so terrified.”

“ Have you seen lord Monteith?”

“ Yes. Don’t blame me:—I hope
“ for the last time. He used such
“ horrid expressions. He would not
“ allow me to speak to him. He will
“ never let me see my children more.—
“ Not once more, Henry.—I only asked
“ for once, before I die. Is not this
“ too hard even to such a wicked wretch
“ as I am?”

Henry continued to bathe her hand
with tears. They afforded some relief
to his full-fraught heart.

“ Shall I ever,” resumed the plain-
tive mourner, “ see your Lucy?—You
“ don’t answer. Will she speak to
“ me? Don’t let her see me if she will
“ not speak to me. Yet how should
“ I rejoice

“ I rejoice to hear her voice once
“ more !”

“ She waits your arrival at Powers-
“ court, there to join with all your
“ friends in the pious task of soothing
“ your afflictions.”

I pass over the remainder of this distressing conversation. No persuasions could prevent lady Monteith from setting off that night for what she termed her haven of rest. She bore her journey better than Mr. Powerscourt expected ; and he perceived with pleasure that the wanderings of her conversation were more the effect of weariness, sorrow, and indisposition, than of deranged intellects. She seemed to struggle for fortitude, but her efforts failed her, when the carriage stopped. “ The
“ prodigal returns,” said she, “ but
“ where is the welcoming father ?”

Henry now inquired after Sir William, and heard that he continued in the same state. Mr. Powerscourt supported, or rather carried, Geraldine into the breakfast parlour; but no previous resolution could restrain Miss Evans's transport on seeing her. "My
" more than sister!—dearer than
" friend!—My love!—My Geraldine!
" Open those sweet eyes—speak to thy
" faithful Lucy.—Come, broken lily,
" rest upon my bosom.—Ever dear!
" ever lovely!—Dearer than in thy
" hours of happiness!—Give me but
" some sign that thou dost hear me.
" Only press my hand if thou canst not
" speak." The languid countess feebly returned her friend's ardent pressure, and dropped her listless head on Lucy's throbbing bosom; while Henry, gazing on his destined partner with looks of affectionate admiration, gently blamed the
the

the overflowing tenderness which charmed him to the soul.

Geraldine gradually revived. "And this," said she, "is my father's house? And thou art Lucy?—And I hear no reproaches—no bitterly-remembered warnings.—O kind friends!—O still kinder Providence, thus to follow guilt with blessings!—But when shall I see my father?"

It had been previously determined that this awful interview should be delayed till the next morning; and Geraldine at last reluctantly consented to try to obtain some repose. "It has been," said she, "a stranger to me—I know not how long."

Her delirium seemed to return upon going into her apartment. "Be sure," said she, "you bar the doors and windows, and let somebody sit up to guard me."

Early the next morning sir William altered so considerably as to indicate immediate dissolution. His daughter had just dropped into a broken slumber. Mr. Evans lamented the necessity of awakening her, but observed, that as her father was still sensible, his forgiveness would be a lasting consolation. Prepared by the counsels of this truly Christian pastor, Geraldine supported herself through the trying scene with meekness, piety, and fortitude. Kneeling by his bed-side, she felt the pressure of his convulsed hand upon her head, received from his quivering lips the kiss of reconciliation and peace, and watched the last struggle of his parting soul, as it winged its flight to join in Heaven those benevolent spirits whom it had imitated on earth. Universal dejection accompanied the news of his death, and the tears of a grateful neighbourhood spoke his unequivocal eulogium.

CHAP. XLII.

—One false step for ever damns her fame ;
In vain with tears she may her loss deplore ;
In vain look back to what she was before ;
She sets, like stars that fall, to rise again no more. }

ROWE.

THE observation of Solon, repeated by the celebrated Cræsus at the most interesting period of his life, that ‘we never should pronounce a man happy until we have seen his end,’ was strikingly verified in my Heroine’s history. Her morn of existence rose with peculiar splendour ; and even the contemplative philosopher, who is accustomed to look beyond the surface, and to balance hope with experience, when he considered the rare advantages of judicious education, amiable temper, discreet

discreet habits, ample wealth, and exemplary connections, united in the person of the lovely Geraldine, must have concluded that no common vicissitude of fortune could demolish this goodly fabric.

The commencement of her married life was, in the opinion of the generality of observers, equally auspicious. United to the man of her heart, her superior in rank, and corresponding to herself in fortune, personal grace, and natural advantages, what "a pity if aught" had intervened to prevent the Hymeneal bond from insuring the happiness of "this matchless pair." The latent spark of vanity, lurking in her bosom, was undecried; and no one could calculate how long it would be before the careless Monteith would drop the character of a lover. No one asked, where is the firm judgment, the manly tenderness,

ness, which should guide and direct this attracting woman through the thorny maze of public life? Every admirer of equipage, vivacity, splendor, and beauty, pronounced the perpetual happiness of the earl and his bride.

Five years had elapsed since Powerscourt-house exhibited the scene of festivity with which I ushered in this narrative; and the sun of Geraldine's peace is set for ever. The shadows lengthening, as the bright luminary descends, point at last to the tomb. The death of a revered father, full of age and honour, is not of itself an event to cast a sable hue over the scarcely mature life of a dutiful affectionate daughter; but the circumstances attending sir William Powerscourt's demise were such as lady Monteith could *never* overcome. She felt convinced that she had shortened his existence; and though his parting spirit,

spirit, uniformly benignant, blessed and forgave his involuntary murderer, a thousand fatal indiscretions rose to her remembrance, and, seen through the medium of their effects, they no longer appeared pardonable levities. She who had aspired to give delight and comfort to all around her, had brought disgrace on her husband, infamy on her children, and death to her father. The pious consolations of Mr. Evans alleviated the horrors of her first despair; but mining grief confirmed the ravages which fatigue and terror had made in her delicate frame. Each rising morning seemed to announce some faded charm. Uniform dejection usurped the place of her fascinating smile. Feebleness and melancholy alike restrained her sportively graceful movements; and instead of the coruscations of her sprightly wit, ‘sorrow unfeign’d and
humi-

humiliation deep' spoke in all her accents.

Yet the heiress of sir William Powercourt's fortunes must still possess sufficient charms to allure a mercenary heart; and Fitzosborne (whom cowardice and chicane had preserved from the vengeance which lord Monteith's pardonable fury first prompted him to require for his injured honour) encouraged the audacious hope, that the legal process which the frantic husband immediately commenced to vindicate his wrongs would terminate in the accomplishment of all his wishes, by putting him in possession of a wealthy and admired wife. Misled by his own false maxims, which had taught him to believe that 'a woman pardons every insult when she loves the insulter,' he ventured on the atrocious crimes which made him master of lady Monteith's person,

person, while he knew her uncontaminated soul revolted at the idea of conjugal infidelity. He was now persuaded, that she must feel anxious to repair her tarnished honour: and being convinced that grief and shame never proved fatal to youth and beauty, when its return to reputation and happiness seemed not only possible, but certain, he determined to make my drooping Heroine, what he called, an *honourable* offer. In the letter which he addressed to her upon this occasion, he explained his sentiments with more explicit freedom than he had dared to do while Geraldine, proud in conscious innocence, felt no necessity of applying for consolation to the subterfuges of sophism. But he now thought her predominant love of fame and horror of reproach would induce her to extricate herself from the disgrace in which his infamous artifices
and

and her own credulity had plunged her, by adopting those excuses which were invented to enfeeble virtue, and to sanctify vice. He knew indeed, that she had a tale to tell, which would harrow up the hearer's soul; but he well understood the laws by which public opinion is regulated, and the delicacy of her sentiments. These reasons convinced him, that she would never expose her defence to a doubtful belief. I shall now subjoin his letter written about two months after sir William's death, with her reply.

“ TO THE COUNTESS OF MONTEITH,

“ Madam,

“ When I reflect upon the melancholy event which has recently happened at Powerscourt, I feel that an additional odium devolves upon me, which reflection and candour must
“ own

“ own I have not deserved. Could I
“ possibly have foreseen, that when I
“ felt the power of your irresistible
“ charms, I was preparing the grave
“ of your worthy father! No, love-
“ liest, and most-adored of women!
“ whatever of imperfection and frailty
“ may be attached to my character, it
“ is pure from the reproach of delibe-
“ rate cruelty.

“ I hear, with inexpressible concern,
“ that your too susceptible mind sinks
“ under the inconveniences of your
“ present situation. Suffer me, madam,
“ to remove the veil of sorrow which
“ now clouds your reason, and per-
“ mit me to direct your view to
“ future prospects. Inconsideration
“ like mine (for I, in justice, claim
“ that the blame should be solely con-
“ fined to myself) is too frequent in
“ this age to excite indignation; and
“ the

“ the known unworthiness of lord
“ Monteith forms an excuse which all
“ ladies who have dissolved their first
“ marriage connection cannot plead.
“ Some conversation will indeed be
“ excited, while his lordship pursues
“ the legal revenge which his vindic-
“ tive temper will prompt him to
“ adopt. But it will cease with the
“ adventures of the day. Your present
“ exemplary behaviour will restore you
“ to the esteem of the world; and
“ permit me, Madam, to indulge a
“ hope, (it is the only one which, since
“ I have heard of your extreme distress,
“ makes my existence supportable,)
“ that you will deign to accept the re-
“ paration which it is in my power to
“ make you, by allowing me to lead
“ you to the altar the moment you are
“ free from your present disastrous tie.
“ There, I trust with the most auspi-
“ cious

“ cious omens, will I dedicate to you
“ a heart penetrated with your merits,
“ and a mind capable of revering all
“ the dazzling superiority of taste, in-
“ formation, and discernment, which
“ you possess.

“ I must hope, that the happy mo-
“ ment will arrive, when we shall look
“ back upon our past sorrows with
“ complacency, and consider them as
“ the progenitors of present bliss. But
“ why should excessive sorrow *now* prey
“ upon your heart? It is but to see
“ you, adorned as you are with all that
“ art and nature can bestow of lovely
“ and excellent; it is but to contrast
“ your character with that of the im-
“ perious insensible being to whom a
“ juvenile inclination unhappily en-
“ gaged you; and he must be lost to
“ the most amiable feelings of huma-
“ nity who does not excuse and pity
“ me.

“ me. The most enlightened literati
“ of the age have proved, that chastity
“ consists in the individuality of affec-
“ tion; and when lord Monteith’s con-
“ duct has forfeited your affection, the
“ transfer of your person to another is
“ equally delicate and just. Marriage,
“ being merely a civil engagement, can-
“ not invalidate the great laws of Na-
“ ture; and the man must be a prey
“ to the most narrow prejudices, who
“ would deny a woman the right of
“ flying to the protection of a kindred
“ mind, when her revolting soul spurns
“ the tyrannical power of a husband
“ whom she can neither respect nor
“ love.

“ O my beloved Geraldine! suffer
“ me to drop the hateful title of your
“ former thralldom, and to call you
“ mine. I have been contented to sup-
“ press the keen indignation of wound-
“ ed

“ ed honour, and have forborne to in-
“ terrupt your filial sorrows by an ex-
“ p'lanation of what must appear to
“ you a base desertion when I left you
“ at the inn at ——. Alas! I only
“ proposed an absence of a few hours
“ to procure you an honourable asy-
“ lum in my sister's family ; and during
“ that interval Monteith, with the ca-
“ pricious cruelty natural to his dispo-
“ sition, bereft me of the treasure I
“ had risked so much to obtain, and
“ then abandoned it to an unfeeling
“ world. What anguish have I not
“ suffered since that moment ! Yet, still
“ more to convince you of the respect-
“ ful delicacy of my unaltered love,
“ I will not ask permission to throw
“ myself at your feet till the joyful
“ moment of your emancipation. Then
“ will I lead you back to the world,
“ nine-tenths of whom will not only
“ justify

“ justify but applaud your conduct.
 “ That system of universal benevolence,
 “ which supersedes all written precept,
 “ gains ground. To that do we ap-
 “ peal, and not to the insane morality
 “ of specific injunctions, which foolishly
 “ and even wickedly attempt to bring
 “ individual actions under the limita-
 “ tion of one general rule. Man in
 “ society must retain all his natural
 “ rights; and the restraints that cir-
 “ cumscribe those rights (if founded
 “ upon false principles) must soon sub-
 “ mit to the resistless voice of public
 “ opinion. Nor does this system tend
 “ to encourage general profligacy of
 “ manners. No! it can only apply to
 “ those more intelligent characters,
 “ whose refinement is a security against
 “ licentiousness.

“ So acute is my own consciousness
 “ of error, that my heart starts from

“ the remorseful recollection of some
“ indirect means, not wholly con-
“ sistent with the lovely sincerity of
“ truth, which my resistless passion for
“ you urged me to adopt. For the de-
“ ceptions which only love can excuse,
“ I humbly entreat your pardon, and I
“ faithfully promise you, that as they
“ were the first, so they shall be the
“ last instances of moral turpitude
“ which you shall ever discover in the
“ conduct of,

“ Madam,

“ Your entirely devoted

“ EDWARD FITZOSBORNE.”

“ TO THE HONOURABLE EDWARD
FITZOSBORNE.

“ Does Mr. Fitzosborne suppose the
“ unhappy victim of his treachery as
“ meanly base as he has proved her to
“ be

“ be weakly credulous, that he affronts
“ her with a proposal, which atrocious
“ guilt alone empowers him to make;
“ and from the indignity of which she
“ was *once* happily secured by insur-
“ mountable barriers, till he reduced
“ her to the dire necessity of surrender-
“ ing the sacred name of wife, and
“ mingling her blushes with her tears,
“ when she hears the once-joyful ho-
“ nourable appellation of mother?

“ You seem, sir, to disown the
“ charge of deliberate cruelty. Ac-
“ count, if you can, for your conduct
“ by any other motive. You know
“ what I was when I had first the mis-
“ fortune of seeing you. You know
“ how soon you formed a plan for my
“ destruction, and by what arts you have
“ made me what I am. You know
“ too, how your insidious friendship
“ seduced lord Monteith, and made

“ him unconsciously accessory to my
“ undoing. To you he owes the con-
“ tamination of his once unsullied ho-
“ nour. From you, my innocent, dis-
“ graced, deserted children, require
“ their mother, their instructor, the
“ guardian of their infant years. From
“ you I demand my ruined peace, my
“ unsullied fame, my lost health, and
“ every blasted prospect, which, while
“ they rendered life valuable, taught
“ me to look on death with serenity.
“ I not only require of you the life of
“ my dear venerable father, but I also
“ charge you with having given in-
“ conceivable anguish to the last hours
“ of one who lived but to make others
“ happy; whose benevolence would
“ not have hurt a worm!—He is at
“ rest.—Would I were so too!—O
“ that I were now joined to his pure
“ beatified spirit!—But I must first pass
“ through

“ through many a purifying sea of for-
“ row. How excruciatingly refined
“ has your cruelty been! Life is in-
“ supportable, but I dare not ask to
“ die.

“ I scorn to reply to the *arguments*
“ urged in your infamous letter. Ad-
“ dress them, sir, to those who, while
“ they lead a life of guilt, with *cheaply*
“ to purchase the reputation of virtue.
“ Yet beware how you confide in them,
“ when the awful summons of death
“ calls you to an invisible world. For
“ me, all my temporal views have ter-
“ minated. I seek no subterfuges. I
“ will endure the censures of the world;
“ they are my just portion. Its vindi-
“ cations I would reject with disdain.
“ I submit to whatever punishment lord
“ Monteith’s lawful resentment inflicts.
“ It does not belong to imprudence
“ like mine either to justify its actions,

“ or to complain of suffering. In re-
“ pentance is all my hope.

“ I will enumerate the offences which
“ claim my constant tears. You will
“ then see what portion of guilt falls
“ to your share. Your artful adula-
“ tion pleased my vanity, and while I
“ supposed myself merely amused by
“ your conversation, you excited a
“ growing interest in my regard. To
“ you, by imperceptible degrees, I
“ transferred the esteem of which I
“ thought my lord undeserving; and I
“ soothed my reproving conscience by
“ supposing, that in admiring you, I
“ honoured virtue. Blindly pertina-
“ cious, I persisted in rejecting the
“ councils of my more discerning
“ friends, and pursued my own falla-
“ cious judgment, which taught me,
“ that immoral actions were not the
“ natural consequence of relaxed prin-
“ ciple.

“ ciple. You know that you concealed
 “ the full tendency of those principles
 “ from me. You know that I always
 “ started at what I thought seemed to
 “ militate against religion and virtue.
 “ You often assailed me, but I was
 “ your admirer and apologist, not
 “ your convert.

“ Thus far I have contributed to my
 “ undoing ; and may my story be an
 “ awful memento to all who, trusting
 “ in the supposed security of their own
 “ virtue, neglect the suggestions of
 “ prudence ; and, under the perverted
 “ name of friendship, admit a sinister
 “ guest to dispute the possession of their
 “ affections with the lawful claims of
 “ connubial duty ! May it also warn
 “ those wives, who, availing themselves
 “ of the indulgence of fashion, permit
 “ the marked attentions of an agree-
 “ able man of unknown or suspicious

“ character, however they may think
“ themselves sanctioned by custom, pro-
“ tected by the rules of decorum, or
“ secured, as you taught me to think,
“ by the bond of pre-attachment. I
“ shall not then die in vain.

“ Let me, though shame and horror
“ alike agitate my trembling frame,
“ this once allude to those particulars
“ of my misfortunes which you alone
“ can illustrate. You seem to allow,
“ that it was to your artifices that I
“ owed the fatal absence of my friend
“ and my husband on the day I left
“ Monteith. You know the arguments
“ by which you influenced my elope-
“ ment ; may your repentance enable
“ you to escape the terrible malediction
“ with which you closed them. You
“ know how I hoped to overtake my
“ lord at every stage ; but your heart,
“ rendered callous by guilt, cannot con-
“ ceive

“ ceive the agonies of mine when I
“ first suspected your nefarious pur-
“ pose. My confused recollection can
“ trace no more. I only know, that
“ returning reason taught me, that I
“ was a wretch for ever.

“ And can you, who know that
“ your life is in my hands, who are
“ conscious that, by telling my sad tale
“ in a court of justice, I could convict
“ you of a crime more foul than mur-
“ der, suppose me capable of pligh-
“ ting my faith to a monster? No!
“ Fitzosborne; enjoy the security
“ which my own feelings, and not
“ compassion for you, allows you to
“ possess; but insult me no more.
“ Know, that the moment which re-
“ vealed your baseness tore from my
“ heart every vestige of esteem, and
“ taught me, by my detestation of the
“ offence,

“ offence, to hate and to despise the
“ offender.

“ From a wish of rousing in your
“ breast the torpid feelings of com-
“ punction, I honour your letter with
“ a copious reply. The compliments
“ you pay to beauty are ill addressed
“ to the faded form which pens this
“ epistle; and the praise of superior
“ talents are equally inapplicable to her
“ whom you have proved guilty of the
“ weakest vanity, and the blindest
“ credulity.

“ I have forfeited the name with
“ which lord Monteith once honoured
“ me, and I will not disgrace the un-
“ sullied purity of my father’s.

“ GERALDINE.”

An interesting conversation took place
between my heroine and her friend
upon the subject of these letters. The

countess had shewn them to Miss Evans, and requested her opinion of the tendency of her reply. "Worthy of yourself," was the answer. "But there is one part," continued Lucy, "which seems to ask for explanation: Some particulars of your story are unknown to me, nor do I wish to hear what it will be agony for you to repeat. But why, my dearest! do you hesitate to do justice to your wounded fame, perhaps too to preserve some other victim from meditated ruin, by giving up a villain to that punishment which the offended laws of his country would inflict upon his atrocious crimes?"

"My resolution," said the countess, "is fixed; but you shall hear the reasons on which it is founded. You know the fabricated tale which drew me from Monteith. My recollection,

“ lection, then not clear, soon grew
“ more confused; and it is only by
“ comparing circumstances that I can
“ connect my narrative. I think I must
“ have been first taken to an obscure
“ house in a lonely situation; for I re-
“ collect on the horses stopping I saw
“ only trees and a mean building, and
“ I thought how foolish it was to stop
“ there, as my lord would never
“ put up at such a place as that.—
“ I suppose that I was detained there
“ till my pursuers had passed upon the
“ road. I remember travelling very
“ fast; but my head was too bad for
“ me to guess where. It was on a
“ Thursday that I left the castle. My
“ lord found me in a small inn in Lan-
“ cashire on Tuesday. I was sitting
“ in a room by myself, and weeping
“ bitterly, when he burst in. He re-
“ viled me in the severest terms, and
“ asked

“ asked me for Fitzosborne. I told
“ him that I did not know where he was,
“ and wished I never might see him
“ more.—Indeed, Lucy, I spoke the
“ truth; but my lord redoubled his
“ ravings.—I know that I said I was
“ not so wicked as he supposed; and I
“ made an effort to kneel; but whe-
“ ther he spurned me from him, or I
“ fell through giddiness, I cannot tell.
“ —I hurt myself in my fall; and, re-
“ covering, found myself covered with
“ blood. But my head was relieved,
“ and I was treated with compassion.
“ I kept asking for my lord. They
“ told me, that he was gone after the
“ gentleman who came with me. O
“ what a sound was that for me! The
“ people at the inn were worthy cha-
“ racters. They believed me to be
“ penitent, and assisted me to escape
“ from my seducer. I knew not where
“ to

“ to go ; but I thought you would advise me. I travelled rapidly towards Powerscourt till I heard of my father’s illness. You know the rest.”

The trembling Geraldine faltered as she repeated this melancholy tale, and then sunk weeping on the bosom of her friend.

“ Suppose me now,” continued she, as soon as she could recover composure enough to proceed, “ repeating this narrative in a court of justice ; every eye fixed upon me with offensive curiosity ; insulted (at least in my own opinion) by that cross-examination, which impartial justice will require to discover whether I was not the willing partner of the crime. The powers of eloquence will be exerted against me. Confusion may make me prevaricate ; and when life is at stake, mercy pleads for the criminal

“ minal whose guilt appears doubt-
“ ful. None of my own servants were
“ with me. I can bring no corrobor-
“ rating evidence. It will be proved,
“ that I was seen with him on the road,
“ and at several inns, and made no
“ effort to escape. My appearance
“ may have caused contradictory
“ opinions; and art like his would
“ certainly take care that the general
“ impression should be unfavourable.
“ To those who know not my usual
“ manner, I might seem passive, or ac-
“ quiescent, as well as insensible.

“ But suppose my character receives
“ all the justification it can by his con-
“ demnation, of what advantage will
“ his death be to me, or to the world?
“ The vain beauty, who is not deterred
“ by my misfortunes from listening to
“ the adulations of a Fitzosborne, will
“ not be dissuaded from encouraging
“ the

“ the fyren song of flattery by hear-
“ ing that a determined seducer can
“ call in arts more unwarranted than
“ illicit persuasion. Lord Monteith can
“ never be reunited to me. His ho-
“ nour and my delicacy demonstrate the
“ impossibility of oblivious forgiveness.
“ Wherever my children appeared, the
“ sad tale of their mother would still
“ be whispered, and the blush of shame
“ must dye their cheeks.

“ Nor,” continued she, wiping the
tear which maternal feelings called
forth, “ can the mortal wound in my
“ reputation ever be healed. I am
“ conscious of a thousand indiscre-
“ tions, proceeding indeed from the
“ erroneous idea, that every virtue, as
“ well as every accomplishment, unit-
“ ed in Fitzosborne’s mind. Not an ac-
“ quaintance have I in Scotland, or in
“ London, who cannot relate those in-
“ discre-

“ discretions, and tell with what mark-
“ ed preference I received his atten-
“ tions ; and when these corroborating
“ tales are considered, will candour
“ say, ‘ Perhaps the vain trifler stopped
“ at actual guilt ?’ A thousand inci-
“ dental circumstances concur to over-
“ whelm me. My mother’s jewels are
“ now in his possession. They were
“ not given with a culpable design ;
“ but who will acquit me ? who knows
“ that lord Monteith’s affairs were
“ embarrassed ? Or suppose I state my
“ motives : there again I am sole witness
“ in my own cause ; and she who be-
“ stowed on a stranger the confidence
“ which she withheld from her husband,
“ can scarcely expect belief. I gave
“ him my picture too.—Good heaven,
“ what blind delusion ! No ! Lucy ; I
“ must be silent. I have been too
“ culpable to talk of innocence. The
“ licentious

“ licentious would say, poor Fitzos-
“ borne was very hardly used at last by
“ the woman who invited his attack;
“ and the censorious would accuse me
“ of taking a cruel method to redeem
“ an irretrievable reputation.”

“ Still,” said Miss Evans, “ there
“ are advantages which you have not
“ considered. Your daughters would
“ certainly be restored to your care.” A
flood of tears burst from the eyes of
Geraldine, and she faintly uttered:
“ Sweet, lovely, helpless girls!” Then,
after a pause, she added, “ Could I
“ flatter myself with the expectation
“ that my protracted life would be ad-
“ vantageous to them, this suggestion
“ would have weight; but a *transient*
“ self-indulgence may be bought too
“ dear.”

“ At least,” urged Lucy, “ let Mon-
“ teith know your story. Convinced
“ of

“ of your comparative innocence, (you
“ will not, I know, allow me to use
“ a more favourable word,) Henry has
“ been for some time employed in col-
“ lecting the circumstances in your
“ favour. The chief are the testimony
“ and the confession of your servants
“ at Monteith. Suffer him to add to it
“ your narrative, before he transmits it
“ to your lord.”

“ By no means; use your influ-
“ ence with your generous Henry to
“ abandon his proposed justification. I
“ know the disposition of him who
“ *was* my husband. While he con-
“ siders me as an adulteress, contempt
“ preserves my gallant from his ven-
“ geance; and he can wait the slow
“ proceedings of the law now his first
“ fury has subsided. But if he knows
“ the wrongs his once-beloved Geral-
“ dine has endured, not the united
“ world

“ world could dissuade him from tak-
“ ing a more summary vengeance. He
“ would pursue the ravisher of his wife
“ to the remotest corner of the globe.
“ and only value his own life as it was
“ the means of assailing his adversary.
“ Chance, or skill, my Lucy, and not
“ justice, determines these blind and
“ audacious appeals to presumptuous
“ vengeance. And shall my helpless
“ babes lose their only parent? No!
“ let every document in my favour be
“ suppressed, at least till lord Mon-
“ teith is secure from the sword of my
“ seducer.”

“ Consider yet once more. Your
“ lord has commenced proceedings in
“ a court of justice.”—“ I have de-
“ served disgrace, and must endure
“ it.”

“ The legitimacy of your little son,
“ I fear, is questioned.”

Geral-

Geraldine shrank with horror. "O
" wide extended evil ! said she. Three
" generations, blasted by me, may
" curse the hour when I was born.
" Yet, my murdered father ! thy be-
" nignant spirit, even in the pangs of
" death, forgave me. Will my slan-
" dered babes be inexorable ? But I
" shall not hear their reproaches. The
" time is not far distant when I may
" speak with an expectation of being
" believed. I will justify to lord Mon-
" teith the suspected, because prema-
" ture birth of his son. O insupport-
" able anguish ? that such justification
" should be required of me."

Miss Evans repeated this conversa-
tion to her father and Henry. The lat-
ter praised the greatness of soul which
dictated these sentiments.

" Your interesting friend, my dear
" child, does indeed repent," said Mr.
Evans.

Evans. " No vindictive rage, no
" self-acquitting accusations of others,
" mingles with her true remorse. She
" properly appreciates the degree of
" her own culpability ; nor does any
" remaining affection for her seducer
" lurk in her passionate reproaches. She
" seems, like the penitent described by
" our immortal bard,

—— " To repent her, as it is an evil,

" And takes the shame with joy."

" To such contrition we are warranted
" to hope that the golden gates of
" mercy will be unclosed."

CHAP. XLIII.

Hail wedded love! — by thee,
Founded in reason, loyal just, and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, son, and brother, first were known.

MILTON.

GRIEF, the swift anticipator of time, continued to prey on Geraldine's youthful cheek. Her decay was visible to every beholder. But Lucy Evans, still listening to the flattery of hope, believed that another and another day would bring the desired amendment. Passionately admiring the beauties of nature, she wooed the tardy spring to approach, and continued to repeat the well-known description;

—Airs, vernal airs,
Able to cure all sadness but despair.

Despair

Despair was, however, the mortal disease, under which her friend laboured. Like Shenstone's interesting Jeffy, she saw in every object some reproach of her folly, or some memento of her former happiness. "What have I," she would say to herself, "to do with hope; " and what without hope is life?"

Engrossed wholly by her friend's distress, Lucy dedicated all her time and thoughts to her service and amusement. "If I could see that faded " cheek blush again!" she would say. "Surely her appetite leaves her. I " watch her sleepless couch till I sink " with weariness. I wake, and the " first object which the lamp shews me " is her unclosed eyes. I offend my " own feelings to assume cheerfulness. " She sometimes smiles, but it is such " a sickly smile, so unlike its former " exhilarating brilliancy, it speaks so " plainly,

“plainly, I will even seem diverted to
“sooth my apprehensive Lucy.”

Henry Powerscourt often reproved this extreme sollicitude; blamed her for being engrossed by one object; and pleaded his prior right to her attention, and her promise of making him happy. “O, talk not to me of festal
“days and happy vows,” she would reply, “when every hour presents to
“me the affecting spectacle of declining loveliness! Surely, Henry, you
“never loved our Geraldine, if you
“can now think of any one but her.”

It was one lovely spring-day, that Lucy prevailed upon her friend to accompany her into the parsonage-garden, to look at the bursting germs of the lilac, and the honey-suckle’s tender green. They had proceeded to Nerina’s bower before the trembling knees of Geraldine required rest. When a little

recovered, she read with pleasure the inscription which Henry had placed there, while Lucy energetically repeated the last lines; and not insensible to the charm of praise, when offered by one she loved, she exclaimed, "There's a happy compliment for you. You used to say, cousin Hal would never learn to make fine speeches."

The smile which Lucy's sprightly ally invited soon yielded to the bitter recollection of former days. "Happy blameless delight!" said the countess, gazing on her friend: "long may it be yours! May my sweet Lucy continue to receive the incense due to her worth, nor fear that a latent poison lurks in the grateful fragrance! Ah, that I had never welcomed praise but from a husband's tongue! "Let me," continued she, "here, in this your favoured retreat, disclose to you

“ you the history of my errors. You
 “ need no warning; but the time will
 “ probably *soon* arrive, when the re-
 “ membered confidence will still more
 “ endear this spot.

“ I had not been long a wife before
 “ I discovered that my eye had be-
 “ trayed my judgment so far as to
 “ frustrate my expectation of ever
 “ finding in marriage that communion
 “ of well-paired minds, that feast of
 “ reason and that flow of soul which
 “ I had looked up to as the perfec-
 “ tion of felicity. Every attempt to
 “ give lord Monteith a taste for intel-
 “ lectual pleasures was unsuccessful.
 “ But I was not unhappy. I remem-
 “ bered your excellent mother’s pre-
 “ cepts, and reconciled myself to the
 “ limited enjoyments which this world
 “ affords. In every eccentricity I be-
 “ held myself the undisputed mistress

“ of my husband’s heart. In many
“ instances I saw my power over his
“ determinations; and often a genuine
“ trait of native goodness appeared in
“ something apparently inconsistent and
“ irregular. I compared my situation
“ with that of many married ladies
“ whom I knew, and I found abundant
“ reason to be contented with my
“ lot.

“ I then first saw Fitzosborne, and
“ unhappily possessed sufficient consequence
“ to attract his notice. He
“ strove to please, and soon grew interesting.
“ Yet, weak as I have proved
“ myself to be, I think I should not
“ have been the victim of his arts, had
“ not my lord’s behaviour to me been
“ perceptibly changed. He was no
“ longer the man who engaged my
“ youthful love, or the husband who
“ claimed my respect and gratitude.
“ Then,

“ Then, and not till then, did I feel
 “ the power of contrast which I had
 “ hitherto indignantly avoided. The
 “ elegant commendations of Fitzos-
 “ borne taught me, that I was not a
 “ being of a vulgar mould. His grace-
 “ ful attentions indicated the homage
 “ which merit like mine ought to re-
 “ ceive. His glowing descriptions,
 “ though delicate as the ear of purity
 “ itself could desire, pointed out a
 “ fairy region of felicity, the abode
 “ of congenial minds, where human
 “ foibles and human sorrows never in-
 “ trude. Infatuated by this unreal
 “ vision, the blameless occupations by
 “ which I had previously diverted
 “ painful reflections became insipid.
 “ Wrongs were converted into unpar-
 “ donable injuries, and inattentions
 “ grew into wrongs. I no longer re-
 “ collected those who were less happy
 “ than

“ than myself. The pang of wounded
“ love lost its tenderness, while it assumed the indignant spirit of offended
“ pride; and my rebel heart, imperceptibly alienated from its lawful possessor, admitted an usurped claim.

“ O, Lucy! if my tale were told,
“ it would not only serve as a warning to our weak sex, whom vanity
“ or susceptibility generally betrays,
“ but also to those husbands who are
“ anxious to guard their honour from reproach. I would bid them not entirely depend upon the stability of
“ our principles or the constancy of
“ our attachments, but to assist our
“ virtue by that almost invincible defence which their behaviour to us
“ would supply. Might they not, without derogating from their own superiority, treat our foibles with generous lenity, and make even our faults
“ con-

“ conducive to our security? Praise is
 “ never so grateful as from those we
 “ love. Attentions are never so plea-
 “ sing as from our dearest friends. Let
 “ them not, when they neglect us, sup-
 “ pose, that the assiduity of an agreeable
 “ follower is only welcome to the *de-*
 “ *termined* wanton. The delicate mind,
 “ that shrinks abhorrent from the
 “ thought of guilt, may divert the
 “ pangs of unrequited affection by in-
 “ dulging the unsuspected feelings of
 “ esteem and gratitude for an amiable
 “ observant friend. Modern manners
 “ justify these connections, and modern
 “ history describes their result. But
 “ let me not recriminate. My hopes
 “ of pardon are founded on my own
 “ penitence, not on the aggravation of
 “ my husband’s errors. The superior
 “ advantages of my education, my ha-
 “ bits of reflection, my sense of shame,

“ the acuteness of my sensibility, were
“ all entrusted talents; and I recollect
“ with terror the awful assurance, that
“ where much is given much will be
“ required.”

“ Still, my Geraldine!” cried Lucy,
“ still art thou the associate of the pure
“ in heart.”

“ I might have been, had I listened
“ to your counsels. Have you for-
“ given me, Lucy? I fear you have
“ not.”

“ Forgiven you? O! when did you
“ offend?”

“ Then will you undertake to pay a
“ debt which has long burdened my
“ conscience? I must hope to live to
“ see it discharged.”

Lucy's finances were not very abundant. She could scarcely understand her friend's intention.

“ Reward

“Reward Henry Powercourt,” continued the countess; “for you alone can. And let my setting sun contemplate the only object on which it can now look with pleasure. My contagious misery has extended to all I love. Be you and your generous noble Henry exceptions.”

Lucy could not resist this affectionate appeal. She only pleaded, that the death of their revered benefactor was too recent.

“His daughter,” resumed the mourner, “wishes to perform the office which he would gladly have executed: I mean, bestowing you on a deserving partner. Look, Lucy, is there much time to lose? Will this hand be long equal to the pleasing task?”

Geraldine, as she spoke, held up her hand against the sun. Its symmetry

was formerly one of her distinguished characts. It now exhibited a bare anatomy, loosely covered by a shrivelled skin. Each meandering vein and ligature was visible. It scarcely obstructed the penetrating beam. Lucy flung herself into her friend's arms, and mingled compliance with her tears.

On the day of celebration, lady Monteith, in compliment to the bride, changed her sable dress for the tasteful elegance of her former habit. She never looked more lovely. A hectic bloom was spread over her cheek, and the accomplishment of a favourite wish gave to her eyes the radiant emanation which they used to possess. She was composed, and almost cheerful. She seemed to forbid the intrusive sorrow which preyed upon her own heart, and to drive the remembrance of her woes from others. A plain respectable
neigh-

neighbour of the Evans's, and his wife, were the only company. They were struck with her appearance, and almost seemed to inquire, "Was that Miss Powerscourt that was, or was it some angel in her form?" In the overflowing of their hearts they talked of the manor-house, the happy scenes of festivity it exhibited when she lived there; and then repeated their blunt wishes, that it might *soon* be as gay again. The countess accepted the well-intentioned compliment, and added, that she hoped it would. Her eyes glanced upon the bride's, who met them with an expression of pleasure. "She hopes to live," whispered she to Henry. "O surely that hope will be gratified!"

The morning after these auspicious nuptials was marked by a conversation peculiarly interesting. Lady Monteith had prepared the necessary forms, and

she took this opportunity of delivering to Mr. Powerscourt what she called a pledge of her esteem. He saw with surprise and regret, that it was a gift of that part of the Powerscourt estate which was by her marriage settlement reserved for her unlimited disposal. Henry exclaimed against the profuse generosity of her intentions; affirmed, that her father's bounty had gratified all his wishes; and pointed out the propriety of presenting it to lord Monteith.

"What," said the countess, "to purchase forgiveness for me? My lord would disdain to receive what I should blush to offer."

"For your children then," said Powerscourt.

"My daughter's fortunes are sufficiently ample, and lord Monteith's must revert to his son. Do not, Henry, reject this gift, if you would
"not

“ not add to my present sorrows. I
“ have been unjust to your merits, even
“ from my girlish days. But though
“ I may confess my undiscerning ca-
“ price, I do not lament what has se-
“ cured your happiness by uniting you
“ to a mind so much better adapted
“ to the firm integrity of your own.
“ Mine is not a disinterested bequest.
“ How richly may you repay this sordid
“ boon by the communication of un-
“ perishing advantages! I have no right
“ to the disposal of my children. I
“ gave them being, but I have forfeited
“ all pretensions to direct their educa-
“ tion, or to dispose of their persons.
“ Every request which I could make
“ would but inflame lord Monteith’s
“ just resentment. You have never
“ wronged him : on the contrary, your
“ discrimination and integrity would
“ have preserved me from the abyss
“ into

“ into which I have plunged. Perhaps
“ a proper representation might induce
“ him to commit to your care those
“ unhappy objects, whom wounded ho-
“ nour must refuse to their wretched
“ mother. They no longer can give
“ him pleasure, and he must wish to
“ remove from him such lively me-
“ ments of former happiness.”

Mr. Powerscourt and his Lucy both
promised to solicit the sacred trust, and
to discharge it with punctual fidelity.

“ And you too will continue to re-
“ side with us ?” inquired the bride.

The countess shook her head.

“ Where do you mean to go ?”
repeated Mrs. Powerscourt.

“ There is but one asylum,” answer-
ed Geraldine. “ If I could but be re-
“ ceived there.” — “ Can we assist you in
“ procuring it ?” resumed her affection-
ate friend.

“ I firmly

“ I firmly believe, that you all have
 “ an interest there,” continued the
 countess, looking round her. “ Re-
 “ member me in your prayers.” Lucy,
 no longer able to mistake her meaning,
 burst into tears; while Powerscourt,
 too much agitated even to notice the
 distress of his beloved wife, attempted
 to relieve the gloom which depressed
 lady Monteith’s prospects. He talked
 of the claims which society had upon
 her, and of the power of time in soften-
 ing grief.

“ What claims has society,” return-
 ed she, “ upon a wretch whom every
 “ one that is tenacious of reputation
 “ must abjure? My husband must cast
 “ me off, or be degraded by the reproach
 “ of submitting to wilful infamy. My
 “ children must be estranged from my
 “ sight, or be suspected of being in-
 “ fected by my contaminating crimina-
 “ lity.

“ lity. Time, Mr. Powerscourt, will
“ heal the wounds of common sorrows :
“ it may redress the wrongs of inno-
“ cence, or recruit the shattered for-
“ tunes of poverty. But what can
“ time do for me ? Can it obviate the
“ fatal effects of my errors ; recall
“ my father from his grave ; give to
“ my children that unsullied honour
“ which my conduct has tarnished ; or
“ restore to myself that peace of mind
“ which I feel to be for ever forfeited ?
“ If time can accomplish these won-
“ ders, welcome years of suffering ;
“ welcome the agonies which lead to
“ hopes so dear ; welcome the poignant
“ regret which teaches the value of
“ blessings that may be again enjoyed.
“ But neither time nor sorrow can re-
“ instate me in these lost blessings, or
“ restore to me the good opinion of
“ the world. My secluded remorse
“ has

" has no witnesses; and if it were
 " ostentatious, it would be suspicious.
 " Part of my story remains untold;
 " but, judging of what is known, the
 " world is right in its renunciation of
 " me. No rules are prescribed for my
 " future conduct, except seclusion, re-
 " pentance, and death."

Mr. Evans interrupted the pathetic pause which succeeded the countess's affecting conclusion with all the solemn earnestness which should ever characterize the Christian priesthood.
 " One duty, lady Monteith, still re-
 " mains, which you must discharge.
 " Cheerfully submit to your present
 " calamities till Heaven sees fit to libe-
 " rate you from them."

" I do," said Geraldine, meekly
 bending her head. " I feel them to be
 " the consequences of crimes. Betrayed
 " by a vain confidence in my own
 " strength,

“ strength, I shut my eyes against the
“ clearest discoveries, and rejected the
“ warning voice of Heaven, which
“ spake in the language of a faithful
“ friend. I not only submit to live, I
“ even cling to life, to that hopeless
“ life, which has no other aim but by
“ recollection and patience to atone for,
“ my youthful follies, and to smooth
“ with meek resignation the painful
“ couch of death.”

“ Remission of sins,” replied Mr.
Evans, wiping away a starting tear, “ is
“ ever promised to sincere contrition.
“ Examine your heart, my dear lady !
“ separate the regret of past pleasures
“ from the sorrow for past offences. Try,
“ by a severe scrutiny, how far the
“ loss of fame may claim the tear
“ which starts at the idea of remem-
“ bered eminence ; and, while the ne-
“ cessity of forgiveness sinks deep into
“ your

“ your soul, compose your anxieties
 “ by reflecting on the mercy of your
 “ God.”

Mrs. Powerscourt looked as if her father had spoken with undue severity ; but the countess, after a mental ejaculation expressive of piety and resignation, proceeded : “ While I frequented
 “ the circles of fashionable life, I partook of their follies ; yet the glare
 “ of perpetual amusement, and the hurry of constant engagement, did
 “ not so far vitiate my mind as to render me unfit for the duties of domestic life. Reflection ever attended
 “ my pillow, and described, not the parties in which I was to appear,
 “ nor the adulation I should receive, but the more grateful images of my
 “ children, my social friends, my quiet occupations. These, therefore, were
 “ ever my dearest delights ; and regret
 “ for

“ for these blessings will mingle with
“ the tear that contrition claims.

“ The love of fame was, I own, my
“ predominant error. Impelled by
“ this powerful passion, I pursued
“ distinction, and, though I only sought
“ it by praise-worthy means, I am now
“ sensible, that this ‘ busy passion’
“ mingled imperfection with my ‘ fair-
“ est aims,’ ‘ perplexed the genuine
“ schemes of defective virtue,’ and
“ ‘ slyly warped my unsuspecting heart.’
“ Though in the sight of man they
“ may wear the same imposing aspect,
“ the searcher of hidden things must
“ discover an infinite difference between
“ those actions which originate from
“ the dutiful desire of pleasing him,
“ and those the ultimate view of which
“ was the applause of fellow-mortals.
“ Your firmer mind, my Lucy, early
“ imbibed the noble ambition of gain-
“ ing

“ ing the approbation of the Supreme
“ Good. Your virtues shunned obser-
“ vation, and only courted the silent
“ plaudit of conscience. For me,
“ though not insensible to the innate
“ loveliness of virtue, nor callous to
“ the feelings of compassion, I felt
“ every faculty roused to exertion by
“ the idea of what the world would say
“ of me. Our history is a comment
“ upon the comparative tendency of
“ these governing principles. Happy
“ Powerscourt! how firm must be your
“ confidence in the integrity of a mind
“ which always acts under the convic-
“ tion that its most secret thoughts
“ are noted by Omnipotence!”

“ The merit was more in my situa-
“ tion, than in myself,” returned the
amiable bride. “ I was secluded from
“ temptation, and I had leisure to ac-
“ quaint myself with my own frailties.

“ Retirement, my Geraldine! is the
“ foil most congenial to female virtue.
“ How will yours, which even in the
“ contaminating world appeared so lovely,
“ flourish in these peaceful shades!
“ What ample supplies will your hereditary
“ possessions afford to your benevolence! Let not mortal sorrow
“ dry up the source which would convey
“ happiness to all around you; but
“ enjoy the anticipated pleasure of
“ widely-diffused liberality.”

“ You forget,” said Geraldine, “ what
“ I now am. The mercy of the law,
“ or the bounty of lord Monteith, must
“ determine the means of my future
“ subsistence. My marriage-articles made no provision for
“ contingent crimes. My dear father did
“ not think his child could be guilty
“ of any, and his conviction of my
“ frailty was attended by death. The
“ mortal

“ mortal sorrow, my Lucy, which has
“ to lament so many deprivations, can-
“ not cease; at least while memory
“ holds her seat. Yet though Reason
“ shrinks from the contemplation of
“ my calamities, I must continue to
“ request, that her guiding ray may ac-
“ company me to the last moment of my
“ frail existence. My generous friends!
“ I sadden you with my sorrows. I feel
“ your kind sympathy. Every day
“ confirms the certain diminution of
“ my strength and health; nor can I
“ conceal from your discernment my
“ conviction that I have not long to
“ live. Your pious offices, Mr. Evans,
“ are doubly welcome. If any un-
“ warrantable sentiment escape my lips,
“ reprove me with the meek intrep-
“ dity of your function, and teach me
“ yet further to explore the weakness
“ of my own heart. Yet in one point
“ let

“ let your candour credit my solemn
“ assertion. It is not from any remaining
“ infatuation, but from a deep sense
“ of my seducer’s atrocious crimes,
“ that I not only, thus unsolicited,
“ express my forgiveness of my de-
“ stroyer ; but I also earnestly entreat,
“ that Heaven would pardon his mis-
“ deeds.”

“ Let us leave him,” said Mr. Evans,
“ to the unknown mercies of his Maker.
“ It is not for us finite mortals to de-
“ cide ; but as far as our views can
“ extend, hope seems like presump-
“ tion. Dreadful, my dear lady, is
“ the situation of that sinner who
“ confides in the infidelity which de-
“ stroys his last refuge ; nor can your
“ charitable prayers benefit him who
“ disdains the mercy you implore.”

C H A P. XLIV.

—What we have we prize not to the worth
Whilst we enjoy it; but being lack'd and lost,
Why then we rack the value; then we find
The virtue that possession would not show us
Whilst it was ours.

SHAKESPEARE:

Soon after the foregoing conversation, lady Monteith received a letter from her lord's solicitor, informing her, that his lordship's meditated vengeance against Mr. Fitzosborne having been disappointed, he had determined to pursue the legal means of redress which were in his power. He had, therefore, instituted two suits in the ecclesiastical and civil courts, which he intended to follow up by an application to the House of Peers for a divorce. The

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learned

learned barrister wished to know what steps the countess would take in her own defence, or if she suspected that the evidence would affect the legitimacy of her son.

Geraldine's answer was submissive, yet not altogether departing from the dignity of her character. She had no defence to make. She acquiesced in the punishment which the laws of her country would inflict. She only hoped, that her confession might prevent some of the horrors of a public investigation. Her ladyship added, that she would address the earl himself on the subject of the birth of his son.

Even in the last scenes of her existence, the ruling passion of my Heroine's mind predominated. Though persuaded that her deep despair could receive no addition; though her imagination had long anticipated the course of
law

law which her lord would pursue, yet the certainty of a legal process, and the apprehension of general infamy, antedated the crisis of her disorder ; and an excruciating pain in her side announced the formation of an abscess, the rupture of which must be mortal. Her sufferings were extreme, but the faint slumber which pain brought on was broken by more intolerable reflections. “ Not a corner in the kingdom,” said she, “ but must now be acquainted with my fall. The village dame, who never heard of my celebrity, will shudder at my disgrace, and warn her daughters to avoid my crimes.”

She now pondered upon the only means of vindicating her character, and she questioned the solidity of those arguments which had induced her to suppress the knowledge of every exculpatory circumstance. She had heard that

Fitzosborne had fled from England; a public disclosure would therefore have a suspicious appearance. But that very flight, insuring in some degree the earl's personal safety, pointed out this to be the proper time for making an application to him in behalf of his son, and endeavouring somewhat to soften his resentment. Impressed with too deep a sense of her awful situation, to deny the alienation of her affections previous to her flight; fearful of exasperating him by saying any thing that might have an air of recrimination; and deterred from entering at large upon her unhappy story, no less by her own weakness, than by a fear of urging him to follow Fitzosborne, she determined to confine herself to what related to her unfortunate child, and trust the partial vindication of her own conduct to the integrity and discretion of Mr. Powercourt,

court, who kindly undertook to be the bearer of the following letter :

“ TO THE EARL OF MONTEITH.

“ It is only in such circumstances as
“ those in which I write, that I could
“ dare to intrude on lord Monteith.
“ You will soon be released from your
“ disgraced wife by an irreversible sen-
“ tence; and I would entreat your
“ mercy to stop your proceedings
“ in the courts of law, and to spare
“ my yet remaining sense of shame the
“ horror of having my story bandied
“ about in the public papers, exposed
“ to indecent raillery and merciless re-
“ proach. I am in the last stage of a
“ rapid decline, fully sensible of my
“ offences, and fearing to add to their
“ number. I declare upon the word
“ of an accountable being, who knows
“ she has not long to live, that lord

“ Loch Lomond is your son, and entitled to be the heir of your honours.
“ Compare the time of our fatal journey to London with the evidence which you may collect of his appearance at his birth, and your suspicions must be removed. And I beseech your justice, do not wrong an innocent babe from resentment to his mother.

“ I entreat your forgiveness; at least do not follow me with your curses. Reconciliation I do not expect. I will, if you require me, for the little time I have to live, forbear the use of your name and arms. I restore your family jewels, which I had left at Powerscourt. On my knees I beg your mercy with my dying lips. I shall commend you and my children to Heaven. Once more to see *them* would be the greatest comfort that I
“ could

“ could enjoy. Perhaps, as I am past
“ recovery, you will grant me that
“ blessing.

“ GERALDINE.”

Lord Monteith had been informed of the countess's departure from his castle, without at the same time hearing of those particulars which would have allowed him to infer her innocence. The rashness of his natural character precluded reflection in circumstances less agitating than those in which he was now placed. Nor can it be wondered at, that, instead of going home to receive more punctual intelligence, he immediately set off in pursuit of a faithless wife and a treacherous friend. He took the direct road for London, for the very reason which should have decided him against it; namely, because Fitzosborne had stated that he should

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pursue

purſue that route. Frantic with rage, and only meditating how to compel his adverſary to give him ſatisfaction for his wrongs, he had reached the confines of Yorkſhire, before repeated diſappointments of hearing any tidings of the fugitives taught him to reflect that they had certainly taken another courſe. It now occurred to him, that the family eſtate of the Fitzosbornes lay in the northern extremity of Lancaſhire. It ſeemed probable that the neglected manorial houſe might be the choſen reſidence of the guilty pair. He travelled ſome miles weſtward with this perſuaſion, till an accident which diſabled his carriage from proceeding compelled him to ſtop at a ſmall inn ſome miles diſtant from the poſt-town. His impatience at hearing that the only vehicle which this obſcure place afforded was engaged, nearly aſſumed the form of frenzy;

frenzy; and the landlord, whose concern at the gentleman's being so passionate, was heightened by his apprehensions that he never might have an earl call at his house again, determined to try if his oratorical powers could allay the storm of words; and, since his honor could not proceed, persuade him to remain contented till his own carriage could be repaired, or the post-chaise returned. With this view he endeavoured to engage his attention; and the Barber of Bagdad was not a better story-teller in his own opinion. He began by lamenting how unlucky it was that the chaise should have just drove away, not ten minutes before his honor arrived, with a gentleman, who came to his house with his wife the night before. The poor lady was one of the prettiest creatures he had ever seen; but she seemed to be very ill, and

was either always crying or sitting in a brown study. The footman who was left to take care of her whilst his master went to make a visit a little way off, said that she was off her head.—A sudden thought shot across Monteith's mind. "Where is she?"—"In that room."—He would instantly see her. Words were vain; and the feeble resistance which the landlord made to prevent him from rushing into the apartment was foiled by a force to which passion gave Herculean vigour. Monteith broke from his opponent, and beheld his countess.

The presence of the wretched Geraldine could no longer sooth the stormy passions of her lord. On the contrary, it now irritated him to the most ungoverned frenzy. He saw she was in distress; but could the most atrocious guilt assume composure on such an occasion?

caſion? She attempted ſomething like a vindication of her conduct. But what extenuation could her crimes admit? They were as apparent as his own diſgrace. Did ſhe not deny any knowledge of the adulterer, when ſhe was recent from his arms? Why aſk to ſee the children ſhe had deſerted, wilfully deſerted? Her ſeeming agony excited contempt, her entreaties inſult; and as ſhe flung herſelf at his feet, he ſpurned her from him with abhorrence. Uttering a volley of imprecations againſt her deluſive beauty, he left her lifeleſs upon the floor, and ruſhed after Fitzoſborne, whoſe life appeared to be too poor a ſacrifice for his mighty revenge.

The effuſion of blood which attended her fall ſomewhat relieved lady Monteith's recollection from the effects of thoſe infernal potions which her ſeducer had adminiſtered; and her real ſtory

being now known, she was readily assisted in her earnest desire of proceeding to Caernarvonshire. Pomade, who had been placed as a guard over her during his master's absence, abandoned his charge, dreading to encounter the athletic arm which had felled the landlord to the ground; and he flew after Fitzosborne to apprize him of lord Monteith's arrival. The absence of the seducer proceeded from two motives: he supposed that he left his victim in perfect security; and he was desirous of inducing his sister, who resided in that neighbourhood, and was possessed of what the world calls a passable character, to receive the unfortunate countess, till, as he termed it, the affair was settled. He was, beside, anxious to procure some medical aid; the effects of his nefarious arts were much to be dreaded, and returning reason was to him

him equally alarming. Pomade's intelligence transferred his solicitude to the care of his own life, which he determined to preserve by any means not *ostensibly* inconsistent with received opinions of intrepidity and honour. A chain of artifices preserved him from the meditated destruction; and after a vain pursuit, Monteith arrived in London.

Lady Arabella immediately hastened to him; but not with the pious design of soothing his anguish, nor of pleading in behalf of an unhappy woman. She was not of a temper to palliate a fault to which she herself had never been tempted; and Geraldine had too strongly awakened her jealousy and envy to allow her to suppose that her criminality admitted of any extenuation. By her malicious comments the account which his lordship had received from his servants in
Scotland

Scotland tended rather to exasperate than to ameliorate his rage; and because their letters did not criminate their mistress, he accused them of being participators in her crime.

Disappointed, by Fitzosborne's leaving the kingdom, in his intentions of either calling him out to combat, or of confining him in prison by the pressure of legal damages, the earl's fury pointed at the countess with an asperity which increased with every real or fancied insult to which her tarnished honour had exposed him; and he pursued the prescribed means of "casting her off a prey to fortune," with an avidity and acrimony proportioned to the violence with which he had once loved her and confided in her virtue. He had sent for his children to London, from the idea, that she might have the effrontery to visit them at Monteith; and his

own active suspicions, aided by Arabella's malignity; soon taught him to believe, that his unfortunate little son was the offspring of guilt. His memory continually tortured him with instances of Fitzosborne's attention to the infant, whose ill health, during its first month of existence, had rendered it a yet more tender object of Geraldine's maternal care; and the persuasion that a spurious issue would inherit his lineal honours, formed the climax of his misery. The dying countess, worn by mental and corporeal anguish, was perhaps less an object of pity. Inebriety was his wretched resource; but even inebriety was ineffectual. His burning passions kindled with the feverish draught; and his servants, who once idolized their frank generous master, now trembled for their own safety whenever they approached him.

In

In this state of mind he was encountered by Mr. Powerscourt, the benevolent advocate of his unhappy wife. The proffered letter was rejected with disdain. The jewels were dashed upon the floor. Every request was answered by a sullen negative, and the representation of her sufferings was treated as a false pretence, invented to excite compassion. The cruel Arabella, who listened to the narrative of her present situation with more attention than her impassioned brother could command, coldly observed, that she really thought dying was the best thing which the poor imprudent lady could now do. Disappointed in his hopes, and even refused the sight of the children, lest he should revive the remembrance of a mother whom lady Arabella said they must forget, Mr. Powerscourt took leave with feelings of the deepest indignation against the unjust,

just, inhuman, self-approving cruelty, which denied forgiveness to one less criminal than themselves, and withheld from a dying penitent the only consolation which could relieve her mortal agonies.

On returning to his hotel, his attention was arrested by an acquaintance, who solicited him to contribute to the relief of a poor fellow who had known better days. He had formerly been his servant, but was now out of place; and the sudden departure of his last master from England had deprived him of a recommendatory character. Henry turned to look at the object of this exordium, and instantly recognized one of Fitzosborne's attendants. The confusion with which Pomade appeared to be overwhelmed was too extraordinary to escape his fixed observation. I shall not particularize what the reader's penetration

tration will easily anticipate. The precipitation with which Fitzosborne had fled from England, joined to his natural ingratitude, and the embarrassment of his circumstances, had prevented him from rewarding the agent who had principally assisted his diabolical designs on lady Monteith. The pressure of poverty, and an accidental rencontre, induced the subaltern villain to discover what he knew of that iniquitous transaction, in hopes of obtaining temporary support. Lord Monteith was soon acquainted with every particular which specified the accumulated guilt of the perfidious wretch who, under the fair guise of friendship, had completed the destruction of a happy family.

The observations by which Mr. Powercourt intended to have enforced this unequivocal testimony were now precluded by the vehemence of Lord Monteith's

teith's self-accusation. His once-adored wife was proved to be innocent in that instance which had appeared to fix upon her the charge of deliberate perfidy. The final views of Fitzosborne could only be obtained by base falsehood and almost murderous fraud. Her delicate sense of honour, shrinking with horror from the imputation of crimes, of which she had rather been the victim than the participator, overpowered her feeble frame; and the wronged innocent (for so the quick transition of lord Monteith's passions induced him now to think her) must with her life atone for a husband's credulous confidence and a traitor's temerity. She was now dearer than ever to his heart; and lady Arabella, convinced that there was no resisting a torrent, endeavoured to obliterate the remembrance of past sarcasms by her lively commiseration for the
sweet

sweet sufferer. Lord Monmouth d
for the rejected letter; bathed every
sentence with tears; called for the little
outcast, whom he had renounced and
banished from his sight; and recollected
with horror, that he had sent it to a
distant county till the law should relieve
him from the supposititious incum-
brance. His daughters were now al-
ternately folded in his arms. Their
likeness to their mother was recognized
with heart-rending anguish. In fine,
the carriages were immediately ordered
for Caernarvonshire; and the tedious
journey was somewhat beguiled by the
hope, that a reconciliation to her lord,
and the presence of her children, might
stop the progress of decay. The silence
of Henry was intended to suppress that
vain expectation, and to prepare the
unhappy husband for the scenes which
awaited him.

Compassion.

Compassion for the children, who suffered much from the fatigue of rapid travelling, induced Mr. Powerscourt to stop two stages short of their intended destination; and he was urging lord Monteith to try to obtain a few hours repose, when an express arrived from the manor-house to announce the increased danger of the countess, and to expedite his return. Fresh horses were immediately ordered, and the travellers set off with a rapidity which even the speed of the earl's former journey could not equal. His tortured memory continually recalled the occurrences of that journey, and his heart seemed somewhat eased of the pangs of self-reproach by the invectives with which he loaded the arch-hypocrite, who then acted the part of friendship, that he might be enabled with his scorpion fangs to transfix his breast with impunity. A ray of hope would sometimes break in. Geraldine

raldine had recovered from one dangerous attack; why not again? Henry had indeed affirmed, that the vital organs were irreparably injured; but it was presumptuous to affirm what human skill could not ascertain.—She might live, and they might yet be happy. Rash, misjudging Monteith! when happiness was not only in thy power, but absolutely in thy possession, the *common* blessing seemed unworthy preservation. All thy solicitude, all the anguish that corrodes thy soul, cannot now restore the flighted good. Could the healing art acquire miraculous energy sufficient to renew in the lamented sufferer the loveliness and the sprightly health which once captivated thy soul,

“ Not poppy, nor mandragora,
“ Nor all the drowfy syrups in the world,
“ Can ever medicine to a mind diseased.

—————“ O now for ever
“ Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content.”

The

The path of reconciliation is impeded by insurmountable barriers; and reflection would soon convince even the uxorious husband, that wounded honour imposed the necessity of separation.

The morning broke before the travellers entered the gate of Powercourt. The earl's attention was arrested by the achievement suspended under the architrave, and a sigh burst from his heart, extorted by the remembrance of the meek benevolence which it was designed to commemorate. Lights appeared at several of the windows. He could discern the servants gliding about when the carriage stopped; yet all was silent, except the whispering breeze. The hospitable doors, which used to fly open at his approach, were now cautiously unclosed. The attendants, whom the noise of the carriages had gathered in the hall, were dressed in the weeds of
woe,

woe, and their countenances were as mournful as their garb.

To the quick interrogatory of, "Is she alive?" a faint affirmative was the only reply; and Monteith, gasping for breath, was rushing forward, when the venerable figure of Mr. Evans arrested his steps. "I am summoned," said the good man, waving his hand. "Let me perform my awful duty, and then you shall be admitted. The countess has sent to request my prayers. Join, sir, and recommend her parting spirit to the Father of mercies."

"Pray for us both," raved Monteith; "and if there be efficacy in prayer, entreat that my burning brain may be numbed by insensibility. If you have any mercy," continued he, raising his voice after Mr. Evans, who had made a sign to the servants to detain him, "let me see my wedded love.

“ love. Do not you know, that it is
 “ my severity which has broken her
 “ heart, and my forgiveness will yet
 “ restore her ? Think you that I can
 “ be patient when one lost moment
 “ may plunge me into perpetual an-
 “ guish ?” Mr. Evans promised that
 he would immediately announce his ar-
 rival ; and he leaned against one of the
 pillars, panting with suspense, expect-
 ing his fearful summons.

It was to the death-bed of withering
 youth and faded beauty, to the couch on
 which greatness, disrobed of its distin-
 guishing ornaments, confessed its de-
 scent from the common stock of hu-
 manity, that Mr. Evans approached.
 “ Is it my extreme weakness, or supe-
 “ rior intelligence,” said the countess
 in a hollow voice, “ that makes me
 “ now attribute such powerful ef-
 “ ficacy to a good man’s prayers ?”

“A fellow sinner,” replied Mr. Evans, “recommends you to Heaven.”

“Your hand, sir! I shall not long be able to thank you.—My situation is very awful.—How my poor heart throbs with pain and terror!—Any news from lord Monteith?”

“He forgives you.”

“And are my children well?”

“They are waiting to be admitted.”

“I fear my sight is now too dim to see them. But I would bless them, if I dare.—Would it be presumptuous in me to bless them?”

A loud groan at this instant issued from the door. It was Monteith's voice, and the dying countess caught the well-known sound. The bed shook with her convulsive tremblings. “I thought,” said she, “that nothing mortal would have affected me. But that voice—oh that I could prostrate myself before him.”

“ My wife ! ” exclaimed the earl, who had by this time broke from those who attempted to restrain him, and approached the bed ; when, shocked by the emaciated face where beauty once resided, he shuddering drew back his extended arms. “ Infernal villain, “ who hath brought thee to this ! “ Cursed traitor ! who first seduced me “ from thee ; — plunged me in vice, then “ stole my treasure ; and now laughs “ at my misery ! — may his guilty soul “ for ever writhe in tortures such as “ I now endure ! Awake, awake, my “ love ! my Geraldine ! ” (for, overpowered by his appearance, she had fainted.) — “ I forgive thee. Oh live, my “ love ! but I know all thy sad story. Do “ live, do but smile upon me. Once “ more bless me with thy tender smile. “ Nothing, nothing then shall part

“us.” The earl continued raving till he was forced out of the apartment.

The last moments of lady Monteith’s life were marked by humble confidence and dignified composure. She called for her daughters, folded them in her arms, and then placed them in her Lucy’s.

“Be you,” said she, “their future mother, and transfer to them that love I once enjoyed. Waste not your precious tears upon my unconscious corpse. My existence is multiplied in these helpless orphans; and they shall flourish under the care of the sister of my soul. Infinite mercy may perhaps permit my separated spirit to witness your pious performance of this intrusted charge.”

She again caught lady Arabella to her bosom. “My eldest darling,” said she, “you will not forget me. Give
“your

“ your aunt this ring, the pledge of
“ reconciliation and peace. Keep this
“ miniature till James can understand
“ that it is his mother’s likeness. Ye
“ guardian angels, watch over these
“ innocents!—All gracious Parent of
“ the friendless, in mercy protect my
“ babes from my faults and my sor-
“ rows!

“ Watch,” said she, addressing Henry
Powercourt, “ my unhappy lord. Do
“ not abandon him to his first sorrows.
“ Time will soften his despair. Tell
“ him that his repentant wife blesses his
“ goodness, and dies in hopes of meet-
“ ing him in a better world. I would
“ have told him so; but the sight of
“ him awakes insupportable anguish.
“ Urge him to comply with my last
“ request, and receive my children into
“ your hospitable dwelling. And you,
“ my Christian monitor! (looking at

“ Mr. Evans), early instill into their
“ minds those principles which repel
“ temptation and support distress. O
“ that lord Monteith would seek con-
“ solation at the healing fountain of
“ salvation !”

Her once-radiant eyes gradually assumed a glassy dimness, yet, though no longer able to distinguish objects, they continued fixed on that part of the room where her children stood. Her clammy hands grasped Mr. Powercourt's with convulsive eagerness, and the last sounds that quivered on her lips were supplications for mercy.

So terminated the short existence of the lovely and amiable Geraldine, to whom nature, art, and fortune seemed prodigal of their favours ; the faithful friend, the dutiful daughter, the observant wife, the tender mother. One fatal weakness, combining with the arts
of

of a base seducer, annihilates all this excellence, blasts the fair promise of many happy years, and drives her to the refuge of a premature grave.

Does no solemn truth speak from her early bier? Does no warning voice repel the flutter of the heart which throbs for adulation, or arrest the career of those who, madly pursuing fame or pleasure, expose domestic happiness, the only "bliss of paradise which has survived the fall," to the casual attacks of ignorance, the subtle malignity of systematic depravity, and the certain ruin of indifference and neglect? In vain does perverse human nature create fictitious blessings, and waste its restless hours in the pursuit of visionary delights, disdaining the pure and peaceful comforts which God and nature allow to all, a guiltless conscience, social enjoyment, self-possession, and content.

C H A P. XLV.

Vain man ! 'tis Heaven's prerogative
To take, what first it deign'd to give,
Thy tributary breath :
In awful expectation plac'd,
Await thy doom, nor impious haste
To pluck from God's right hand his instruments of
death.

WARTON.

MRS. POWERSCOURT, whose restrained
sorrow had forborne to interrupt the
parting soul, sunk upon the lifeless
corpse of her friend, and pressed the
yet-warm lips with a fervid kiss. Then
receiving the terrified children into her
arms, " Ever dear and sacred trust,"
she exclaimed, " living images of your
" angel mother : dear lost companion !
" pleasing friend ! faithful partaker of all
" my youthful joys !—By all the anguish
" of this excruciating separation,—by all
" the

“ the endearing remembrances which
 “ my impassioned memory shall ever pre-
 “ serve,—by all my hopes of meeting
 “ thy approving spirit in a happier
 “ world, I will discharge my trust to
 “ these sweet innocents, and for their
 “ sakes subdue the keen regret which
 “ would make life appear a barren
 “ desert, bereft of thy endearing love-
 “ liness.”

To the raving desperation of lord
 Monteith no pen can do justice. Un-
 used to calamity, and indignant of self-
 reproach, his stubborn heart refused to
 submit to the righteous but severe pu-
 nishment; and his galled conscience
 started from the terrifying accusation,
 that he, “ like the base Judean, had
 “ flung a pearl away richer than all his
 “ tribe.”

He sought to silence the horrors of
 remorse by the most extravagant affec-
 tion

tion to his lady's memory. Her funeral was conducted in the highest style of pageant decoration; and he wearied himself with examining designs for a monument, which he proposed to have executed in Parian marble, and that its magnificence should rival the proudest structures which sorrow, taste, or vanity have erected over "fallen mortality." He teased his children with his frantic caresses; vowed that he only existed for their sakes; determined never to be separated from them; and traced, with mingled ecstasy and anguish, the various resemblances which they bore to their mother.

"My little Geraldine," he would say, "is her perfect image. Just such a smile as that of my beloved, before I knew that accursed Fitzosborne. Lucy has her beautiful hair, and Arabella her melodious voice. Poor
" James.

“James too—but I have never seen
“him since he was three months old.
“They will all forget her, except Arabella.
“Yet the murderer still lives.
“—But may I perish, Fitzosborne, if I
“do not pursue thee to the remotest
“corners of the globe.”

While the heart glows with sentiments of just indignation, it is natural to inquire the fate of the author of these calamitous scenes. The last hours of Fitzosborne's life were not sufficiently splendid to allure inexperience to desert the plain path of rectitude, from the hope of acquiring fame or fortune by indirect means. He had indeed plucked the forbidden fruit, but he had found it, like the bitter apples of Sodom, distasteful and delusive, the origin of misery and regret.

Disdainfully rejected by the victim of his artifices; compelled to fly his na-

tive country, or to languish in hopeless captivity; abandoned even by the licentious part of the world, who, though they enthusiastically applaud triumphant vice, are ever first to shun indigent guilt; Fitzosborne was now left to meditate on the abuse of distinguished talents, the waste of perverted industry, and the folly, as well as the wickedness, of that knowledge which only aspires to organize depravity.

These insupportable reflections were, however, soon interrupted; and his miserable existence brought to a period by other means than the sword of an injured husband and betrayed friend. Retributive justice not only willed his fall in that country where he had imbibed his pestilent notions; it also decreed, that those very opinions should be the immediate occasion of his death. It is well known, that the merciless tyranny

ranny which Robespierre erected on the tomb of the murdered Louis spared neither friends nor enemies. Fitzosborne, as an Englishman and a gentleman, became an object of suspicion. In vain did he plead that he had disgraced his ancestors, and abjured his country; in vain boast his contempt of superstition and abhorrence of prescribed forms; in vain bend with mock adoration at the idol shrine of liberty, or with servile adulation load the new Romans with the falsified epithets of magnanimous and illustrious: they, who spared not a Roland or a Condorcet, could not be expected to regard sanguinary *principles*, unless attested by the repeated perpetration of sanguinary *deeds*.

In the gloom of the Abbaye prison, exposed to all the various wretchedness of want, disturbed by the groans of fellow-sufferers, and surrounded by the
instru-

instruments of despotism, the wretched Fitzosborne might have seen the refutation of that false philosophy which, founded upon the visionary perfectibility of the human species, rejects the wise restrictions which Infinite Wisdom has contrived as a barrier against the extreme atrocity of a fallible creature. But Fitzosborne could neither commune with his own heart, nor seek forgiveness at that throne of mercy which he had often presumptuously blasphemed. Amongst the effects of these alarming doctrines, it is not the least lamentable that they steel the heart against contrition. The unhappy sinner, whom passion betrays into guilt, trembles at the recollection of those crimes which the systematic villain justifies. But the sorrows of penitence lead to hope, while the pangs of impiety end in despair.

Shrinking

Shrinking with horror from the disgrace of a public execution, Fitzosborne applied to the unbeliever's last resource, and with his own hand anticipated the stroke of the guillotine. He died amongst men brutalized by guilt, or petrified by suffering. He could not, therefore, expect the poor consolation of pity ; but his last moments were unexpectedly rendered more agonizing by the intelligence (which the keeper of the prison communicated with all the unfeeling cruelty of his profession) that the Dictator, having received a very favourable account of his talents, had not only determined to liberate him from prison, but also to advance him to some confidential employment. Shuddering at the idea of that eternal sleep, the reality of which he yet wished to believe ; clinging to life with greater earnestness, in proportion as the possibility

bility of living diminished ; cursing his own impatience, which had irretrievably destroyed the fair prospects which he might have realized ; stung by remorse and self-accusation, without one ray of hope ; Fitzosborne's terrible unlamented exit appeared to anticipate the horrors of futurity. But here let me drop the awful veil ; and while justice refuses the commiserating tear, let human nature, conscious of its own infirmities, humbly solicit the protection of Omnipotence against the magic of novelty, the delusions of sophistry, and the arrogance of human Reason, whenever, proud of her own supremacy, she presumes to pass the interdicted bounds prescribed to her finite powers.

The history of my remaining characters will be comprized in a few pages. Mr. Powerscourt prudently determined to let the first effervescence of
lord

lord Monteith's grief subside before he requested to be intrusted with the care of those children whose society the unhappy father fancied would alleviate his affliction. But the cheek of infancy is not always dimpled with smiles. Its little foibles require calm correction; and though it is delightful "to teach the young idea how to shoot," its wild luxuriance must be tenderly repressed. Calamity did not increase the number of the earl's virtues, and patience and application were never wanted in the list. He therefore soon found the prattle of childhood too mild an opiate to lull the tortures of corroding reflection. Lady Arabella too, who, on hearing that skill in education was the very highest ton, had determined to be governess to her sweet little nieces herself, perceived that verbs and prepositions

sitions were very dull reading, and that the engagements of the school-room were absolutely incompatible with mixing in the world. In less than three months after the death of their mother, the children were fixed at Powercourt to the mutual satisfaction of all parties.

Love is said to be the only passion which can conquer death. But friendship, as belonging to the same family, claims the like honour. Long after the lamented death of lady Monteith, the following sonnet flowed from her Lucy's pen :

TO FRIENDSHIP.

○ Friendship ! solacer of grief ! whose smile
Can calm the terrors of life's ruthless storms,
Come, with thy daughter's memory, and beguile

My pensive hours. Recall the fairy forms

Of early pleasures. Bid them trip along
Gay as the sanguine hope which youth in-
spires.

Renew my Geraldine's enchanting song:
That song which warbles now 'mid angel
choirs.

O be her peerless excellence display'd,
True to the likeness in my bosom worn!
O'er weeping error cast that lenient shade,
Which screens repentance from opprobrious
scorn.

Gild with thy lamp the cold sepulchral gloom,
And twine thy roses round the mouldering
tomb.

But it was not to the expressions of
vain regret or elegant susceptibility
that this amiable woman appealed for
the attestation of her inviolable affection.
Her exemplary discharge of the awful
trust which she had undertaken, un-
questionably confirmed the sincerity of
her regard. The opening graces of
the lovely children promise to reward
her

her pious care, but who that recollects their mother's fate will dare to predict the event?

Though the neighbourhood round Powerscourt-house will long retain an affectionate veneration for the memory of their late benefactor, yet they confess with gratitude, that the present representative of that illustrious house is the true heir of the good sir William's virtues. The exertions of an intelligent cultivated mind supply the deficiencies of a less ample fortune; and the desires of Henry Powerscourt to confer happiness are only limited by his power of bestowing it.

Though happy in his union with a woman, whose taste and character is most happily adapted to his own, he has not entirely forgotten the attachment of his early years; and he views the adopted children of his once adored
Gerald.

Geraldine with all the fondness of paternal affection. He traces with tender anxiety their resemblance to their mother; and he sympathizes with poignant sensibility in all his Lucy's regrets and cares. Often as he wanders through the shades which derive a greater beauty from the interesting remembrance of youthful pleasures, he contemplates the perplexed maze of past events, and raises his eyes in grateful veneration of that Being who kept him steadfast in the path of duty, and ultimately led him to tranquillity and content.

Mr. Evans continues to enjoy a serene old age, dignified by the exalted virtues which are comprized in the general term of christian philanthropy. He occasionally visits at the manor-house, and is gratified by the company of his children and their young charge.

charge. But his time is generally spent at the rectory, meditating on the perplexities of the world he is about to leave, and the perpetuity of that to which he is journeying. His respectful gratitude to his late patron is exemplified by the care he takes to preserve among his parishioners the remembrance of those mild virtues conspicuous in fir William's character, which were ennobled by the song of angels, and are happily adapted to universal practice, "Peace on earth and good-will toward men."

Lord Monteith continues to drag a miserable existence. His intemperate habits have entirely obliterated all the graces of his person and the amiable qualities of his mind. He is now the associate of boon companions, and the dupe of sharpers; sought only by servile sycophants and usurers, and avoid-

ed

ed by all who preserve any decent respect for character. His health rapidly declines. Prevented by legal restrictions from ultimately injuring his children's property, he has been driven by his thoughtless extravagance to the desperate resource of life annuities, which have been multiplied, till they so nearly reach the value of his rent-roll, that it is now become a favourite speculation whether his life or his fortune will hold out the longest.

Repeated matrimonial disappointments have given lady Arabella Macdonald something of a cynical cast of mind. Not that it appears in her conduct, for she still glitters in the first circles, and is always the best dressed and noisiest woman of fashion in the room. But she has been heard to express several misanthropic sentiments; and her dislike to the male part of the species has arisen to such a degree
of

of acrimony, that she affirms she will never part with her liberty, "which is "the zest of life," to oblige any of those odious mercenary creatures. There are people who think that she will persevere in her resolution, not on account of her having lately become a *belle esprit* of the first class, but from the knowledge of some *private* events which have lately happened at the pharo table kept by the right honourable lady viscountess Fitzosborne, wife of a British *senator*, and lady Arabella's most *particular* friend.

The Author's intention of enforcing some moral truths by an appropriate narrative is now complete. Whatever disregard of applause she may affect in her assumed character, or whatever indifference she may really feel for the fiat of the self-constituted guardians of literature, if they should pervert their important

portant and highly-responsible office by exerting the influence which learning and wit give them over the public taste in recommending works injurious to public morals, she still recollects, that sound sense, accurate discrimination, and correct judgment, form a part of that public by which her merits must be tried; and she cannot but feel anxious, that the rectitude of her *intention* should be admitted by such a tribunal.

If her apprehension of the dangerous tendency of some popular productions should be deemed ill-founded, the *real* friends of morality and religion will still say, "God speed!" to the enthusiastic champion who sallies forth to resist even the delving mole that exerts its puny powers to undermine the sacred edifice. Nor will her acrimonious censure of those false lights which lead the

unwary astray, induce the reflecting reader to suspect that she is hostile to the cause of real candour, true philosophy, and judicious liberality. In common with every well-wisher to the happiness and improvement of the world, she deeply mourns the irreparable injuries which they have received from the blasphemous pretensions of those hypocritical furies who have usurped their hallowed characters.

She feels it necessary to add an apology to the lovers of propriety and decorum, for her frequent allusions to religious subjects, and her intermixture of serious truths with fictitious events. It is not from any vain desire of throwing her feeble gage in the crowded fields of controversy, much less from a want of heartfelt reverence for sacred themes, that she adventured to make these digressions; but as the most fashionable, and

and perhaps most successful, way of vending pernicious sentiments has been through the medium of books of entertainment, she conceives it not only allowable, but necessary, to repel the enemy's insidious attacks with similar weapons.

One of the misfortunes under which literature now labours is, that the title of a work no longer announces its intention: books of travels are converted into vehicles of politics and systems of legislation. Female letter-writers teach us the arcana of government, and obliquely vindicate, or even recommend, manners and actions at which female delicacy should blush, and female tenderness mourn. Traits on education subvert every principle of filial reverence: Writers on morality lay the axe to the root of domestic harmony: Compilers of natural history debase their

pages with descriptions which modesty cannot peruse : Philologists dispute the revealed will of God : Philosophers and antiquarians deny its historical credibility : and Mathematicians define the nonentity of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being. The Muse chaunts the yell of discord, and, under the pretence of universal citizenship, sounds the dirge of that *amor patriæ* which her classic predecessor sought to inspire. And last, though not least in its effect, the novel, calculated, by its insinuating narrative and interesting description to fascinate the imagination without rousing the stronger energies of the mind, is converted into an offensive weapon, directed against our religion, our morals, or our government, as the humour of the writer may determine his particular warfare. The egotism of infidelity, which guides the wandering pen,

pen, may be the undesigned cause of some of these effects; but *repeated* deviations from an ostensible subject can only proceed from a settled design of *covertly* attacking whatever science once taught us to revere.

THE END.

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Monthly Review, Jan. 1797.

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